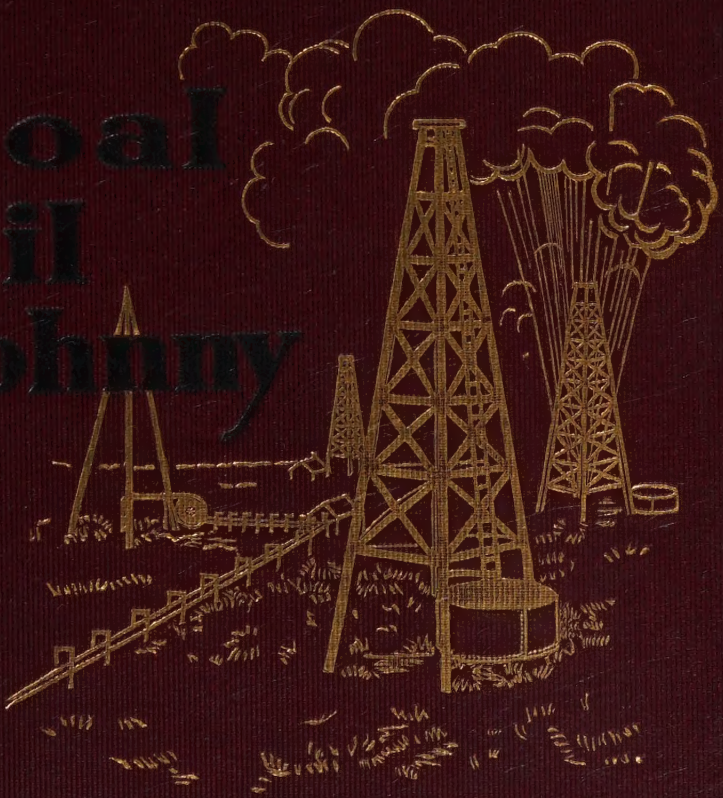
Coal Oil Johnny



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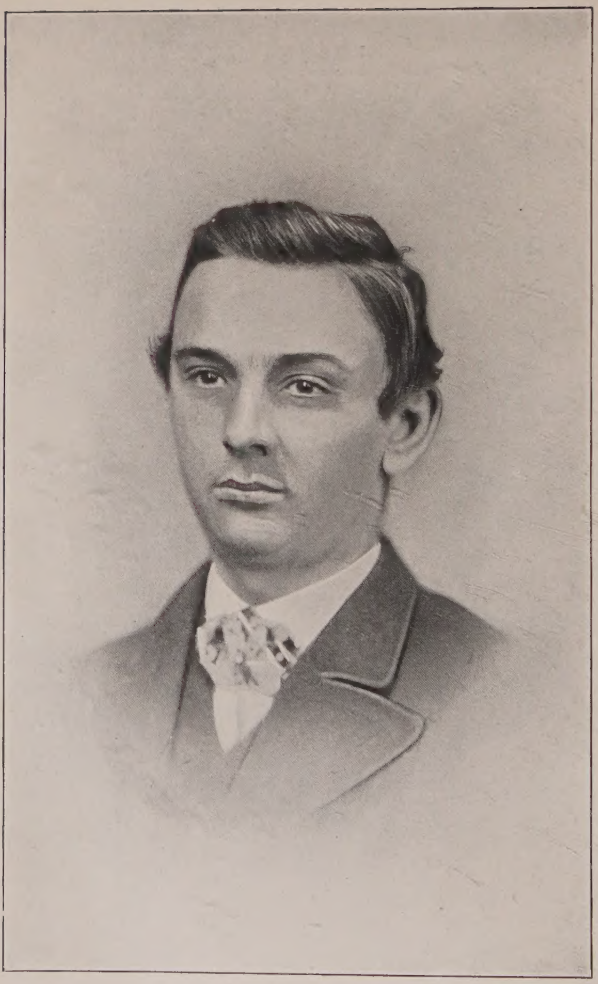

JOHN WASHINGTON STEELE (COAL OIL JOHNNY).
Taken during Philadelphia Career.

Coal Oil Johnny

Story of His Career as Told by Himself.

(John Washington Steele.)

FRANKLIN, PA., 1902.

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Press of
Hill Publishing Co.,
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List of Illustrations.

John Washington Steele (Coal Oil Johnny). Taken during Philadelphia Career.

Home of "Coal Oil Johnny" on the old farm. The Culbertson McClintock House.

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View down Oil Creek from Steele Farm, showing Rouseville on the left.

"Coal Oil Johnny" standing at the site of the famous Hammond Well.

Latest Photograph of Mr. Steele, "Coal Oil Johnny."

Introduction.

So much of a misleading nature had been written concerning my career, that I resolved, after earnest consultation with friends, to present this little volume. While visiting Franklin, Pennsylvania, several years ago the matter was definitely planned, and Mr. S. H. Gray kindly consented to assist me in the preparation of the volume; and to him I feel under many obligations for advice and help. He is the first man to whom I ever related those incidents of my life in which the people have always manifested so much interest. I am also under greater obligations to General Charles Miller, of Franklin, Pa., than I can find power to express. His kindly, helpful nature, which expresses itself in good deeds in so many ways, has proven a great encouragement to me while arranging this volume.

I present the narrative to the world with

no apologies whatever. In it I have tried to clearly and succinctly set forth some of the features which appear to have proven attractive when reference has been made to them in the newspaper press. It would be presumptious for me to predict the cordiality of the reception which this little volume will receive. It is published not so much for any benefit which may accrue to me as to set at rest many of the misrepresentations which have been set in circulation concerning my career; and I have tried to make the narration as accurate as the lapse of many years will permit. I remain,

Most sincerely,

JOHN WASHINGTON STEELE,

Franklin, Pa. (Coal-Oil Johnny).
April 22nd, 1901.

Coal Oil Johnny—His Book.

CHAPTER I.

The incidents surrounding my early life may not prove of great interest to the reader who will search these pages for lively and exciting occurrences, but they may prove in some measure attractive in showing from what a prosaic existence may spring circumstances which have to some extent "set the world agog."

I, John Washington Steele, better known to the public as "Coal-Oil Johnny," was introduced to this big and busy world in the year of our Lord 1843, near Sheakleville, Mercer County, Pennsylvania. Whether or not I was born under a lucky star is one of those things which it is difficult to determine. Providence seemed kindly disposed to me certainly during the early part of my life, and possibly would have been as devoted to me during my whole career had I not

taken the bit in my teeth and pulled away on my own responsibility, cheerfully assisted at times by others, and leaving Providence, figuratively speaking, to go one way, while I traversed a path which to a large extent was wholly and entirely my own.

When I was one and a half years of age my sister, Permelia, who was two years older, and I, were adopted into the family of Culbertson McClintock, a well-to-do farmer, comparatively speaking, who lived on Oil Creek in the County of Venango, Pennsylvania, across the creek from and slightly above the present site of Rouseville. So the only parents I ever knew were "Uncle Culbertson" and his wife Sarah, whom we always called "Aunt Sally," and no parents could have treated children with greater care and kindness than we were treated by this loving couple, whose greatest delight seemed to be in doing good to others. In these later years my memory has often gone back to them, and always with a heart full of gratitude, although not unmixed with regret, because of the fact that I did not always so conduct myself as to better pay the honest tribute due their memory.

Hamilton McClintock, the father of Culbertson McClintock, my benefactor, was one of the first settlers of the Oil Creek valley—for it was known as the Oil Creek valley long before the time of oil derricks, flowing wells, and quickly acquired fortunes—and he divided his acres amongst his three sons, Culbertson, James Jr., and Hamilton, the latter occupying the old homestead, situated on the site of the present and once thriving town of McClintockville.

In those times the farmers living along that afterwards famous stream were dependent for a livelihood upon the produce of their hard and stony acres. Measured by the agricultural standard of other portions of the country, the land was not fertile, and the woodland to be cleared, and the rocks to be removed, presented obstacles which would have appalled a less hardy class of people. However, their tastes were simple and their wants easily satisfied, and ceaseless and untiring industry brought to the homes of many what in those days were comparative comforts. Culbertson McClintock did not live to see the golden flood of wealth which in later years swept down the valley,

transforming everything as by the wand of an enchanter, for in the year 1855 he died, at the age of forty-five.

My boyhood days upon the farm were but a repetition of the existence of thousands of other youngsters who lived in comparatively isolated communities. It was a life that would have killed a city boy with its loneliness, but to one who had never known anything else it was chock-full of interest and excitement. Was not the barking of foxes within a few yards of the house a sound pleasing to the ears of a youth who liked to hunt? And were not the cries of the wildcats welcome music to a youth who liked the excitement of a shot at the "pesky varmints?" And surely nothing could have been more exciting than for a bare-footed boy trying to dodge the rattlesnakes which were at that time so plentiful along the creek. I used to go hunting for them with a favorite dog, who regarded all rattlesnakes as his legitimate prey, and knew how to despatch them with ease. However, I do not recommend rattlesnakes as fit playmates for children, but I want to say that, as snakes go, the rattler is the king among them, a

gentleman when compared with other crawling things. He never intrudes himself upon your presence, always gives you a fair warning when you are about to intrude upon his, and will get out of your way when given half a chance. As a boy I knew him well, and for him I cherished a respect which has never dimmed with years.

The country bordering on Oil Creek at that time was a veritable huntsman's paradise. Rabbits, squirrels, and game birds were plentiful, and during vacation times I enjoyed myself.

Once a week I used to sling a bag of grain over the shoulders of a horse and ride up through the lonely woods to Irwin's mill, at Cherry Tree. This was rare fun, and I always enjoyed it more than any chore I had to perform around the home.

I presume the evenings were lonely enough, but they did not seem so then. In the summer time we retired shortly after sundown. But if a boy does go to bed it does not follow that he goes to sleep, and many an hour have I lain awake listening to the song of the whippoorwills, and the ghostly hooting of the owls, the cry of the wildcats, and the bark of the foxes.

Indeed, little did we care in those times for the outside world. We only dreamed of it, or listened to stories of it as they fell from the lips of some stranger or peddler who chanced for an evening to be enjoying the hospitality of the fireside, or maybe caught some glimpses of it from the columns of the weekly newspaper.

In the summer time, before I had reached an age where I could assist much around the farm, I attended school at what was known as the McClintock school-house, a short distance down the creek from the farm, and in the winter time I received instruction at the Blood school-house, situated two or three miles above our place. One winter I attended the "academy" at Cherry Tree, an institution of learning of some pretensions for the time and locality. It was presided over by a Mr. and Miss Crosby, and branches of knowledge were taught that were not touched upon in the district schools of that period. It was at this school that I "graduated," that is, it ended my education so far as schooling was concerned, except for a short period many years afterward. Mrs. McClintock was a woman of good education

for those days, and she possessed the practical and sensible idea that it was essential that everyone should be more or less versed in "book larning;" and for this reason advantages were afforded me, which compared with those received by some of the other boys of the neighborhood at that time might be considered exceptional. However, I cannot say that I took advantage of the chances offered me or profited by them as fully as some who were less favored.

My "Uncle" and "Aunt" were members of what was called the Seceders' Church, with a creed supposed to represent the old-time Presbyterian faith, and the meeting-house which they attended was situated in Oakland Township, about three miles from our home. It is standing there to-day. My benefactors being religiously inclined, lived conscientiously according to the light which was given them, and were faithful churchgoers. "Aunt Sally" believed in walking the straight and narrow path, and tried to persuade others to walk in it; and she drilled me faithfully in the weekly Scripture lesson, with the result that while yet a lad I could recite the first four Gospels of the Bible, a

number of the Acts, and could answer correctly the hundred or more questions of the catechism, "without looking at the book."

Early on each Sunday morning the tasks about the farm would be completed, and the family, seated in the lumber wagon, would start for the Oakland church. The edifice is, and was at that time, surrounded by a large wood, and the gatherings there on Sundays bore no little resemblance to what are known in some sections of the country as "old settlers' meetings." The worshippers assembled somewhat early, hitched their horses to the trees, and the neighbors would gather in groups and gossip of the doings of the vicinity during the preceding week, and, of course, the crops and the state of the weather were unfailing topics.

We always took our lunch with us, for worshipping in those times required time and physical hardihood, and refreshment was necessary. At ten a. m. Sunday-school would convene and continue in session until eleven, when Elder Slentz would begin a discourse which smacked of earnestness, promising eternal forgiveness and happiness to those who would repent, and setting forth a

certainty of fire and brimstone for the unrepentant. His abjurations were always attended with terrific poundings of the Bible or the pulpit. I boyishly argued that one of his principal reason for carrying on in this way was to prevent all the younger and some of the older members going to sleep. But that was only a boy's way of looking at it, and possibly in my thoughts I did the good man an injury.

After the forenoon services the congregation were given fifteen minutes to lunch, after which we would regather to listen to a second discourse from the minister, which was never less than an hour in length.

No one could blame a youngster for wanting to sleep, but "Aunt Sally," who occupied one of the seats at the side of the pulpit, took me in with her, and by pinching and shaking managed to keep me fairly attentive until the close of the meeting.

The congregation having thus become inured to hardship, were not extremely shocked when in later years my aunt discovered that I had a voice suitable enough, according to her idea, for singing bass in the choir, and persuaded me to join that aggregation.

As a member of the choir I did my best, sang way down low while others sang high or half-way between, and in some way escaped punishment for the crimes I committed in the name of music. But "Aunt Sally" was pleased, and that settled it with me.

CHAPTER II.

The house in which we lived when I was a boy was of the old-fashioned, log-cabin style of architecture, of one room, with a door and window at each side, while at one end was a large fire-place which furnished light and warmth for the house, as well as heat for cooking purposes. About the room were strung festoons of dried apples, dried pumpkins, and red peppers. The roof of a shed built against one end of the house served as a means for reaching the garret, wherein were stored many of the farming implements when not in use, and in this room were also placed the butternuts, walnuts, hickory-nuts, and chestnuts, which I always gathered in the fall and put away for the long winter evenings.

In this place, too, "Aunt Sally" stored her "yarbs," prominent among which was a goodly supply of boneset, for she believed in the efficacy of the tea made from that plant as firmly as I despised the concoction. Were anything wrong with my physical organiza-

tion, out would come the boneset, and I would be treated to an internal bath until my soul cried out in protest. Many a time did I suffer in silence rather than to endure a deluge of my Aunt's favorite remedy.

The neighborhood frolics were gatherings which I always enjoyed. Nuts were brought down from the garret, and cracked between a hammer and flat-iron, the reddest and juiciest apples came from the cellar, and cider drawn from the best barrel into the big pitcher. And with the old fire-place all aglow, the conversation seasoned with, perhaps, crude, but hearty, wit, hardships were forgotten, and the evenings would wear away with a zest and happiness which were never experienced in later life, and left deep impressions upon the memory which can always be recalled with the keenest pleasure.

One day Mr. McClintock purchased a cook-stove, and thenceforward the cooking and heating were performed by this means; and, while not so cheerful as the old fire-place, it was more convenient, and it seemed to me we stepped up one rung higher in the social ladder than our neighbors who were stove-

less. I put my hands in my pockets, tipped my hat back on my head further than was usual, and went boasting among the boys at school about that new cook-stove up "to our house." This assumption on my part excited base envy among my comrades, of course, and they at times would argue their side of the question in such a way as to leave scars upon my anatomy, as well as upon their own. But I stood by the stove with the earnestness of an old crusader, and the cook-stove won. It was bound to do so, and when it did, was the proudest moment of my life.

Later Mr. McClintock built a frame addition to his house for living apartments, and the old log structure was made to do duty as a kitchen. When other additions came in later years, the old log house was demolished, and the McClintock house looked, except for its age, as it does to-day standing on the hill above the creek.

The saddest incident of my youthful days, when the mind is so sensitive to impressions, was the death of my sister. My boyish grief for a time was uncontrollable, and it was hard for me to reason how a Providence represented to be so kind and loving should

take away one who was so much to me. As time rolls on, they say we forget to a great extent such things as the passing away of those who have been near to us: but I cannot believe this is strictly true. I think that rather one learns to better conceal the grief from others as time rolls around, though the scar is always there. Two years after the death of my sister, Emily Scott was taken into the family. She was older than I, and her coming cheered the loneliness somewhat which we had all felt after the death of my sister. Some years later she married Richard Moffitt, but only lived about five years.

As I have already mentioned, the stream upon whose banks we lived had been called Oil Creek for years before the beginning of the oil excitement, and this name was probably given it because of the oil springs which bubbled up at different places along its course. One of these was in the creek at our farm. We would construct a dam to keep most of the water away from it. and the oil would form on top of a pool, and be soaked up by a flannel rag which was placed on top

of the water. When this rag became soaked with oil, the contents would be squeezed into a bucket. This was necessarily very slow work, and probably not more than a barrel a year could be gathered in that way, but we received seventy-five cents to a dollar a gallon for it from those who bottled it and sold it under the label of "Seneca Oil." Why it was called by that name is not clear, but possibly because of the Seneca tribe of Indians which in the earlier days flourished, hunted, and scalped, in that vicinity. The label on the bottle set forth the fact that "Poor Lo" believed in the efficacy of the remedy for his aches and pains, as an inducement for the white man to use it. And use it the white man did, especially if he were a resident along the creek, for all the ills that flesh is heir to, and took the fluid internally, externally, and eternally.

When Culbertson McClintock died he left the farm to his wife for her use during her lifetime, with a provision that after her death it was to go to me. I was but twelve years of age when my uncle went the way of all earth, but, nevertheless, I set to work with a will to do what I could around the

farm. I was never accused of laziness, not even in spending money in later years. My shoulder was thus early braced to the wheel, and throughout the most of my life it has been kept steadily there. A time when it was not, and the circumstances relating to that period, will be referred to in some of the later chapters. But my life at this time was one even, plodding course, and left me but little time to think or care for what was going on outside of the confines of the Oil Creek valley.

And so I might have always lived a quiet, homely life, and been always a respected tiller of the soil, had not a Yankee by the name of Drake drilled a hole in the ground up near Titusville, and released such a fountain of oily wealth that it started excursions of fortune-seekers from all over Christendom to our quiet and peaceful valley. Where before the visit of a stranger had been of rare occurrence, they now came in crowds to the quiet settlements and homesteads of Oil Creek,—high-booted, flannel-shirted men on horseback, who offered such amazing sums for a lease of our stony acres that it almost seemed a dream. They scat-

tered wealth in such profusion that we gaped in open-mouthed wonder, and it was from these men that I first caught a glimpse of how life was lived in the great space beyond my limited horizon.

A great many of our neighbors, as well as ourselves, discovered that we had been camping right on top of several independent fortunes and had never for an instant suspected it. Jimmy Buchanan, the good-natured Irishman across the creek, even in one of his highest flights of imagination—and he took a flight once in a while—never suspected that so much wealth would come to anyone, even when he was dreaming of the glories of his adopted country from the bogs of "Ould Ireland." Scrub-timber lands, which had been considered of no value, turned out to be veritable gold mines of wealth.

Mrs. McClintock leased her farm to a number of oil operators, and for each lease received the usual bonus of four or five hundred dollars, payable at the drawing up of the lease, and received one-eighth royalty on all the oil produced. The land favored and taken by the oil men was mostly that por-

tion near the creek, the low-lying bottoms, for in the early days of oil the producers ignored the hilly portions, arguing that land of that kind would not prove valuable for the purposes of oil production, and as a consequence neglected many thousands of acres which in later years gave forth immense fortunes.

So the Oil Creek valley became a busy hive of industry almost in the twinkling of an eye. Derricks reached skyward everywhere, and the sound of the pumping engine was heard in the land. Busy, hustling humanity had taken possession of our quiet acres and overridden them, and, instead of the peacefulness of yore, the mad race for wealth encompassed everything, and changed conditions completely. Towns sprung up like mushrooms on a fall morning, and attracted the class of people who always flock to those communities where law and order are set to one side, and, as a result, a reign of lawlessness often ensued that was only equalled by that of the mining camps of the West.

At the mouth of Oil Creek, a settlement composed of a mill, a blacksmith shop, a store, and a few houses, grew into a good-

sized, progressive city, whose growth of buildings was too slow at first to keep up with the inflow of population. An oil exchange was afterwards established, and Oil City controlled the oil market of the world. From the howling, bustling, crazy, wicked place of that time, Oil City has developed into a municipality of substantial progress. Prospectors came and went, waded in mud, slept in mud, ate mud, and drank—well, everything and anything except water. The old residents of the valley rubbed their eyes at these sights,—and bought safes in which to store the wealth which now came to many of them so easily.

Evidences of prosperity crept slowly into our houses, in the form of pictures, carpets, and more pretentious furniture, and "biled" shirts became commoner than they had been in the earlier times. Children were sent to colleges and academies to receive a "polish" not theretofore procurable. The wand of the enchanter was over the valley, turning everything it touched into gold, and some were there who were getting ready to spend it, and I was no minor exception.

In the year 1862 I was married to Eleanor

J. Moffitt, the eldest daughter of Robert Moffitt, a well-to-do farmer of Oakland Township, Venango County, Pa. We had known each other from childhood, had attended the same church, and participated in the same neighborhood festivities. At this time I was nineteen years of age. A kind Providence is good to those to whom He gives a faithful and loving helpmeet, and in this respect I was especially favored. Through all my hardship and trial, in good and ill repute, through sunshine and shadow my wife never lost faith in me, and to her alone is due mainly the credit for all that I am to-day.

Our marriage was blessed by the birth of a son, Oscar C., who now holds a responsible position with the Burlington Railroad.

CHAPTER III.

With the coming of the oil industry, necessarily occupation was afforded to many of the people who had resided along the creek, whose attention had theretofore been given entirely to farming and kindred pursuits. I went into the business of teaming, work which was quite remunerative at that time, as the methods of transportation of oil later adopted were not then in vogue. Barrels had to be hauled from Union City, Franklin, and other points, to the oil fields, and, when filled with oil, these were drawn to the nearest shipping point. Machinery for drilling and the timber for derrick construction also furnished plenty of work in the teaming line.

To haul a heavy load through the oil country mud was something of an art, and it produced as choice a vocabulary of profanity as could be found anywhere in the world. Many of the teamsters of the early days of the oil excitement took advantage of the tide which leads to fortune and laid by ample

riches. Certainly anyone who could overcome such difficulties as were presented by the muddy travel in those days possessed sufficient spirit to overcome the hardest of obstacles, and when applied in the proper direction usually resulted in success.

To describe the nature of the oil region mud is a task beyond my vocabulary. It seemed but a covering to the bottomless pit, and a teamster who knew how to swim possessed an advantage over one who did not. I have never entirely doubted the story told of one teamster who was found standing alone by the side of the road, flourishing a whip, and giving voice to choice exclamations of profane text, interspersed with an occasional "haw," "gee," "git up." A passer-by, having doubts of his soberness or sanity, approached cautiously and called for an explanation of the strange actions, to which the teamster replied, "Well, stranger, I've got a team of mules down in this blasted mud somewhere, and I am trying to persuade 'em to come out."

There was a great deal of boasting and betting among the men as to the merits of their respective teams in the matter of haul-

ing heavy loads. On the road between our place and the Rynd farm, just above, was a very steep hill, and to pull a heavy load up this incline, even when the roads were dry, was quite a task for a good team of horses. One day a teamster by the name of Pike was boasting of the heavy load which a team of horses belonging to him had drawn up this incline, and said, "They got up all right, but you ought to have seen the parables fly out from under their feet!" I took it that by "parables" he meant "pebbles."

Another way of transportation early adopted by the oil men was by boat. Ordinarily the water was not high enough at all seasons of the year to allow a heavily loaded boat to float, but this was overcome by means of pond freshets. Various dams had been built along the creek and tributaries for the operation of mills, and one or two others were constructed by the oil men. An agreement was entered into with the mill men by which, for a certain amount of money, the water in the dams was released at stated times. This would cause the streams to rise, and the boats were floated down the creek to the Allegheny River at Oil City, whence

most of the oil was transported to other places.

The boats were built to carry oil in both barrels and in bulk, and the position of pilot was an important one in many respects. The stream was narrow and crooked in places, and considerable skill was required, when the swift rush of water came, to steer a boat around the bends, keep it away from the rocks, and prevent its colliding with other boats. The craft was provided always with long sweeps or oars, fastened to the ends, similar to those used on rafts. I learned the business of piloting boats quite well, and got through the dangerous occupation without any serious mishap.

On "pond fresh" day all was excitement along the creek for many miles. Hundreds of boats, loaded with small fortunes of the greasy fluid, and manned by anxious pilots, awaited the flood. Finally the water would come with a rush, bearing with it boats from up-stream, joined by others as they came along, and the whole flotilla go helter-skelter towards the mouth of the creek. Perhaps a boat by an unlucky collision would lose a sweep and then go whirling around, caus-

ing dismay to the other boats, whose pilots were doing their best to dodge it. Sometimes a boat would become lodged on a rock or some other obstacle, and as the other boats would glide past the pilots would shout words of "encouragement" to the unlucky crew, calling forth a bombardment of profanity which would have sunk a less formidable fleet.

Having passed safely down stream, one was apt to get in a jam at the mouth of the creek, as all the boats came together, and as may be imagined they would not bump together delicately, but generally with a force that scattered kindling wood around indiscriminately, and would place the crew in a position where they had to imitate the historic O'Grady and "swim out." Many of the bulk boats were not at first provided with covers, and sometimes the luckless pilot would be treated to an oil bath from which he would emerge with feelings too fervent to permit of clear utterance.

Crowds of people would assemble at Oil City on "pond fresh" days to see the mix-up, and were generally well repaid for their curiosity. The pilots were a harum-scarum

lot of fellows, who looked danger in the face recklessly, and were willing to take chances after knowing fully how many there were. My experience taught me that I was well adapted for this business, better than for some of the piloting I did in later years.

Up to this period I had never been in a large city, and I longed to visit one. So when Mrs. McClintock concluded that I should take a partnership in the store owned by her nephew, David Hayes, and decided to send me to Pittsburg with him to purchase goods, I was delighted. This was before the days of railroad transportation down the valley of the Allegheny, and we made the trip by steamboat. Never did I enjoy anything more than my visit to Pittsburg. The scenery on the banks of the beautiful river, the passengers, the management of the boat, were features all new and interesting to me.

In Pittsburg Mr. Hayes and I stopped at a hotel, the name of which I have forgotten, but I have never forgotten, and shall never forget, the gorgeousness of the hotel clerk who received us and bade us welcome. His manner and diamonds dazzled my unsophisticated imagination, and when he got

through receiving us I considered it a great condescension on his part to allow us to stop in the place. The furniture in our rooms was finer than any I had ever seen, and I was almost afraid to go to bed. I had not yet assumed the character of "Coal-Oil Johnny," when rooms of the kind we occupied in the Pittsburg hotel would have been rejected by me in that aristocratic and haughty manner which I suddenly acquired.

Even after I had overcome all my scruples and retired, I could not sleep, because I was partially afraid that someone would come up and order us out. But after a time I concluded that the room was really meant for us, and I fell to thinking of the wonderful things I would have to tell to the folks when I got back home, the hotel clerks, the cord which one pulled when he wanted to order anything, and all that. Then during the night I could hear the policemen shout the hours, with the assurance that all was well.

But morning came at last, and with it came my first experience with the festive drink known as the "cock-tail." What par-

ticular breed this one belonged to I do not now recall, but I do remember that to me, who had become somewhat accustomed to the iron-rusting, boiler-splitting, nerve-wracking fire-water of the oil regions, it seemed good; and I struck up this new acquaintance in the alcoholic family and remained friendly with it for a number of years.

After breakfast I allowed my prospective partner to go out and purchase the goods thought necessary for stocking our oil-region emporium, while I proceeded to ride upon the street cars. I was a little timid about this at first, but soon learned how to stop the cars and get on, and found all that was necessary after that was a nickel a trip. My bashfulness soon wore off, and I entered into the spirit of the thing with a zest that would have done credit to any pursuit. I believe I rode upon every street car in Pittsburg that was on duty that day, and when evening came I was acquainted with a whole army of conductors and drivers, and some of them were calling me by my first name. It is extremely probable that the street-car company paid a dividend as the result of my visit to the Iron City.

While in Pittsburg I purchased a barrel of syrup. As a boy I had such a fondness for this kind of sweetness, that I had always looked forward to a time in life when I could purchase all of it that I wanted. So I resolved upon a fulfillment of this consuming passion. Never had I been able to get enough syrup. I ate it upon every article of food that I liked. But occasionally the supply would give out, and my soul become possessed with sadness.

As our steamer plied up the Allegheny River after my eventful visit, and the reflection came to me that the barrel of syrup was also on board, I concluded that the greatest happiness that could come to anyone in this world had come to me. A week or so after getting home I fairly swam in syrup, then only waded in it, and shortly got so I could get through a meal without it and without feeling any qualms of conscience. At the end of a month I found my greatest delight in presenting it by the jugful to various neighbors that I liked, and later to the neighbors that I did not like. Too much sweetness, as well as too much sourness, in this life, I concluded was not a good thing.

I never went into partnership with Mr. Hayes, for circumstances so adjusted themselves that heavier and weightier cares became mine, and, instead of the role I had been playing, I assumed one which for grotesqueness and foolishness soon gained for me a reputation all over the country.

Anyhow, I do not believe I was cut out for a merchant, for bargain-making never seeemed to be my forte. One instance of my ability in this direction will suffice to give the reader an insight into my shrewdness. At one time, there being a dearth of eggs in the neighborhood, my "aunt" started me out with the horse and "cracky" to find some for cooking purposes. I finally brought up in Dempseytown, visited Merrick's store, and asked if they had any eggs. Upon being answered in the affirmative, I inquired the price, and was astonished to find it so low. I then asked how many eggs they could let me have.

"About one hundred dozen," replied the grocer.

"What will you take for the whole lot?" I next inquired; and the grocer naming a lower figure than before, I informed him I

would take them all. And I did. My "aunt" was astonished at my idea of what was meant by a "few eggs for cooking purposes;" and her liking for me was well shown, when in spite of this she was willing to risk money by putting me up in the grocery business.

CHAPTER IV.

It took some time for the people to learn all the dangers incident to the handling of petroleum, and it is a wonder that more fatalities did not occur during the early days of the oil business. I might have gone down in history unheard of and unsung outside of our immediate diocese had not "Aunt Sally" one day poured crude oil in the kitchen stove for the purpose of starting a fire therein. Doubtless at the time she thought there was no fire in the stove, and therefore was not prepared for the flash which followed and which set fire to her clothing, burning her horribly. She died the next day, in the month of March, 1864, from which date I might say began my career as "Coal-Oil Johnny," although the name had not been applied to me as yet. I was greatly grieved at the taking away of this good woman and I mourned her loss as I would have mourned the loss of a mother. Her main thought in life had been to make everything happier

and brighter for all whom she considered as members of her family.

She was a woman with ideas in advance of her time, and the world would have been better off with more like her. Most of her thought and planning had been for me, and she had provided well for my future. She had always been generous to me in money matters, and was generous to others as well. Of course, when oil was struck on her farm she received quite an income from that source. However, she determined to be the guardian of her own fortune, and she bought a safe in which to store it. In addition to the oil income there was something from the portion of the farm devoted to agriculture, enough to pay the expenses of the household, and she used but very little of the money received from the sale of oil.

The farm and the income therefrom came to me after the death of Mrs. McClintock, as I have stated, by virtue of the will of Culbertson McClintock, her husband. When the safe was opened after Mrs. McClintock's death, I found therein, belonging to me, twenty-four thousand and five hundred dollars.

Of course, this sum found in the safe has been represented by various writers to amount to as high as five hundred thousand dollars; but the sum I have stated is correct. Of course, other money came to me from the farm, and no inconsiderable amount, but of this I will speak later on.

There were neighbors of ours in the valley of Oil Creek who realized from the proceeds of their oil farms fortunes several times larger than the one that came to me. But my method of disposing of the money which came to me was so distorted by the newspaper writers that an outsider was at least partially justified in thinking that I was the only one who ever realized a bank-roll from the oil business. Did I care so to do, I could specify instances where other oily bank accounts at that time placed my income completely in the shade.

It is a fact well known that the robbers secured more money by breaking into John Benninghoff's house than I ever possessed even when flying at my top rate of speed and "cutting a swath" as the greatest spendthrift and all-'round easy man that the oil country ever produced. However, some of

those who realized these fortunes were not more successful than myself in holding on to them, but dissipated them by means of speculation and similar methods. With mine I scattered vermillion along the highways and byways in such a manner as to draw attention to myself, and lead people to think I was a great deal richer than was actually the case.

As I have stated, some of our neighbors lost money by speculation; others listened to the siren-voiced promoters of flash companies, and were scooped; banks failed and fleeced others. So when one kindly old friend got me in a corner one day and said, "Johnny, you ought to hold on to your money, because it will come handy some day," I called his attention to some of the above-named circumstances, and eloquently informed him that as it seemed to be the custom of the people along the creek to lose their money, I intended to have some fun with mine before it all got away. And I did; although, to be truthful, I closely resembled a shorn lamb when I had finished.

The people who dwelt in the valley before the days of oil, were honest, as a rule, and

had perfect confidence in one another, and the word of a neighbor was generally accepted to be as good as his bond. They were not bothered by wily schemes of speculators, and never bought green goods. Trusting their neighbors, they trusted at first everybody who floated in with the oil excitement, many of whom found the confiding farmers easy marks because of their unfamiliarity with the business methods of busier places. And I was innocent, too.

I am not going to offer any apologies for my course as a "high-flyer." It has been run, and, knowing what I do now, it would not be repeated did opportunity offer; but had I possessed a better insight into the ways of the world to begin with, and been less confident and trustful, the probability is that such a character as "Coal-Oil Johnny" would have never been known or used to scare children with when they were bad.

I concluded, from the amount of money found in the safe, and which represented one-eighth royalty on the oil produced, that the farm, for the three years preceding Mrs. McClintock's death, had produced eighty thousand barrels of petroleum a year. I think this was a safe estimate.

Soon after the demise of my "aunt" I went to Franklin, the county seat of Venango County, to consult with a lawyer as to my business interests. Already the news of an unsophisticated country boy having fallen heir to a large fortune, had preceded me. I desired to find out what legal forms, if any, were necessary, that my interests might be protected, as well as the interests of the oil men who leased various portions of the farm. The lawyer advised me to allow the leases to run on as they had been doing, and that when I became of age I could ratify them. It did not take him long to give me this information, in fact, I do not think our talk extended beyond thirty minutes, yet it cost me five hundred dollars, the attorney explaining that this amount could be considered as a retaining fee, and that I could thereafter feel at liberty to call upon him at any time for additional advice. I recall distinctly, however, that there was no obligation on his part whatever to pay any part of the money back provided I should not see fit to consult him in the future. I paid him the money, however, without objection, as I reflected that at that time no one in the oil

regions was transacting business to benefit his health. But that five hundred dollars was the first peel off the roll of twenty-four thousand dollars found in the safe.

I went back to my farm and attended strictly to business, collecting my royalties and otherwise employing my time, and not in the slightest dreaming of the giddy whirl into which I was doomed soon to plunge.

Next to my liking for syrup I loved a good horse. A world full of horses and syrup would have just suited me at one time; but before Mrs. McClintock's death I had satiated my appetite for syrup, though I had never possessed enough of the "wherewithal" to satisfy my craving for a good horse.

With the purchase of my first team of real good horses began that long line of misfortunes which finally landed me high and dry as a wreck upon the reefs of adversity. A devil always creeps into every man's life in some way or other. The first Satan that crawled into my garden got there because of that pair of horses, and the pestiferous devil caused me no end of trouble.

One day I met a man by the name of Daniel Fowler, who hailed from Meadville,

Pennsylvania, and whose occupation was the selling of barrels to oil producers, as agent for a cooperage establishment. In his hearing I expressed the desire to purchase a good team, and he ventured the information that he knew where I could get one; that the animals were owned by a gentleman named Barton, who resided in Crawford County, not far from the town of Meadville. I went up there and purchased the team.

This was the second dip from the money box, and it was the only one that proved a profitable investment. I finally sold the team for more than I paid for it, the selling price being one thousand dollars. In other respects, however, this visit to Meadville did not result so fortunately, and in many ways proved in the end to be more expensive than any I ever made.

A country boy coming into possession of a fortune, which by hearsay, at any rate, grew to enormous proportions, with a probable income for the future which would prove much greater, I soon became known for quite a distance from my native heath, judging from the innumerable requests for

HOME OF "COAL OIL JOHNNY" ON THE OLD FARM. THE CULBERTSON McCLINTOCK HOUSE.

money and assistance which came to me from all directions. Fond parents wanted money with which to educate their children. I received confidences from people who had mortgages on their farms or owed money in other ways, as to their financial standing. People who held stock in mines which were veritable bonanzas offered to part with it to me for a mere song. Girls asked me for money with which to buy new dresses; and others of the fair sex, losing sight of the fact that I was a married man, and not having seen me, described their charms in flowery phrases, and announced their readiness to walk up to the altar and be tied to me any time I would say the word. Maiden ladies asked me for money wherewith to buy new dresses and other articles dear to the feminine taste, in order that they might make themselves so presentable as to duly impress those upon whom they had designs. By refusing them I doubtless saved many an unsuspecting male creature from an awful fate. To reasonable requests I sometimes responded favorably, but I found it was a good deal easier to lend money than to get it back. A great deal has been brought up

against me, and much reproach heaped upon me, but I can say conscientiously that I never refused to assist a friend in need whenever I could consistently do so.

However, I have noticed that when I stood most in need of friends very few of the beggars were around to lend me their aid, or even proffer a word of sympathy. Some of those nearer my home, knowing my unsophisticated ways, started out with the deliberate intent to separate me from my bankroll. One of these was Dan Fowler, the fellow who had engineered the horse deal.

I do not wish to do anyone an injustice. Perhaps in most cases I was my own worst enemy, but Fowler's actions towards me, as I hope to show, fully warrant my belief.

He was a plausible fellow, of excellent address, but of the genus that is best described as "cute." When I went to Meadville to look at the horses his manner to me was most affable, his words were honeyed, and I had not been in his company fifteen minutes before my head was whirling with the idea that I was not only one of the sharpest but one of the greatest financiers on earth. He invited me to his house, introduced me to

his friends, and entertained me better and with more consideration than I had ever known before. One of those with whom he made me acquainted was Mr. Horace Cullom. I had not been talking to the latter many minutes before he made me a business proposition, the substance of which was that he proposed to erect a business block on a lot which he owned, situated at the corner of Chestnut and Water streets, and he desired me to take a half interest. The inducements which he held out were so flattering that I was not long in making up my mind to accept them, and I agreed to pay forty-five thousand dollars for my share. Articles to this effect were duly drawn up, presumably by Mr. Cullom himself, and I agreed to pay five thousand dollars down, and five thousand dollars a month thereafter, until the total was all paid in. He was to superintend the putting up of the building, and all I was to do was to put up my share of the money. In view of what later occurred I will state that, either directly or through my agent, I kept up these payments, and have in my possession at the present time a receipt for the whole amount so paid.

In the course of the conversation which resulted in the foregoing transaction, Mr. Cullom mentioned that he was the owner of a fine residence property, situated, as I remember, at the corner of Crab Alley and Chestnut street, in Meadville, and as I had been so willing to invest in the business block, he said he thought that possibly I would be willing to purchase the house and lot. This led me to visit the premises in his company, with the result that I purchased it for ten thousand dollars. At the same time, I bought the Barton farm, where I had purchased the horses, for the sum of seven thousand dollars.

I knew as much about real estate as a pig knows about the dead languages, and afterwards I discovered that I had granted a favor of considerable proportions instead of having been the recipient of one.

Mrs. McClintock died in March, and the Meadville transactions occurred in the following May.

My Meadville friends still insisted on granting me favors, and Fowler having flattered me into a partial belief that I was the greatest and sharpest financier of my time,

shortly after the date of the foregoing transactions I was induced to purchase several choice building lots, for which I laid down the snug sum of fifty-five hundred dollars.

My wife was in extremely poor health at this time, and had been for some months. I called in a young physician from Meadville to diagnose her case, a doctor whom I had met on my visits to that place. His advice was that a change of scene would be beneficial to Mrs. Steele's health. For this advice he did not charge me anything, for which I was very grateful. However, later he confided to me the desire to borrow six hundred dollars in order to take a further course in medicine, and I loaned it to him. He has it yet. At least he never returned it to me; and I have an impression that I paid pretty dearly for professional advice at that time, both to lawyers and doctors. The advice of the doctor, however, proved to be the most expensive in the long run, as it led me to Philadelphia, where, before I left, I disposed of a goodly sum of the coin of the realm in various ways. But I have always hoped that the "pill mechanic" finished his education and lived happy ever after.

The events here related, in connection with what occurred later, will show that I was gradually getting into a position from which I was to emerge eventually not only as a lamb much shorn, but very greatly disfigured.

CHAPTER V.

Following the advice of the good Samaritan "who took me in," I made arrangements to take my wife and boy to Philadelphia, hoping they would be benefitted by the change of scene and climate. My father-in-law had been a merchant in the Quaker City before moving to Venango County, and we had many friends and relatives in the city. So I hired an agent by the name of John Williams to look after my interests while I would be away, leaving instructions for him to report to me regularly as to business at the farm. This was in the latter part of May, 1864. However, before starting for Philadelphia, the famous Hammond well came in. It was located on the flat portion of the farm, down close to the creek. It flowed at the rate of three hundred barrels a day, and proved the center of much interest and excitement. The income from this source promised to swell my income to no inconsiderable extent, and I jumped into greater "prominence" than ever as one of

the lucky "oil kings" of the time. Special dispatches, greatly exaggerated, were sent out regarding this new strike.

No fortune ever comes easier to a man than the income from royalties on oil. In the first place, there is practically nothing to lose financially, the entire risk being assumed by the producer, and, if a lucky strike be made, the money from the royalty comes so fast as to leave one in a kind of a trance. With me it was surely a case of "come easy, go easy." All I had to do at this time was to loaf around, smoke good cigars, and watch my bank-roll swell. Yet while it was all I was compelled to do, it was not all that I did. So much wealth bothered me, and I was itching with a desire, which I guess had always lain dormant in me, to get rid of it. The opportunity to do so arrived, and I took advantage of it.

Also about this time the "Lone Star" well was struck, which was a good one. At this period, too, I became acquainted with Mr. William H. Wickham, of New York City, afterwards mayor of that famous metropolis, I believe, and who at this time like thousands of others,

was in the oil regions seeking investment. He was a member of the firm of Wickham & Jones, and when the Hammond well was struck he offered to purchase my one-eighth royalty right in the lease for one hundred thousand dollars. After some thought I agreed to accept his proposition, and one Saturday afternoon the bargain was verbally completed. It being late in the day, however, it was agreed that he should come to my place on the following Monday, when articles would be signed and I should receive the money.

But alas! My fondest hopes were shattered, and fortune frowned where I expected to be favored with a smile. On Sunday the well stopped flowing, it having been flooded out by water on account of the pulling of the tubing from a couple of wells across the creek from it. I stood and gazed at the well, and realized that one hundred thousand dollars had slipped through my fingers without the slightest trouble, and I felt worse about this than if some masked robber had held me and taken it from me forcibly. For the first time I realized how it felt to have my hand upon a fortune and then lose it, and

for the first time I appreciated the feelings of one who had staked a fortune upon the turn of a card and lost.

However, in the present case the malefactor was Nature, and while in later life I learned the uselessness of filing objections to her decrees, I was not so wise at this time, and some of my kicks were of the forcible variety.

But through the dark cloud of misfortune and disappointment I suddenly caught some glimmer of hope. I had not agreed to part with my interest in the Hammond on the ground that it was a flowing well, and this presented to me a chance of which I tried to take advantage. As I have said, our agreement of Saturday had not been reduced to writing, and I figured that if I could get down to Oil City and have the papers drawn up and signed before Wickham started for the farm, all would be well, and my conscience would be clear. Of course, there was a probability that he would ask me if the well was still flowing, but I would not be able to tell for sure, as it might start up again during the night, and I would not visit the well before leaving for Oil City Monday morning.

It was early on that day when my agent, Williams, and myself, hitched the fastest horse in the barn to a light buggy, and started on a race down the creek for a hundred thousand dollar stake. Never did I take a trip in which I was so much interested. The horse ran most of the way, the mud was scattered promiscuously, and through the early dawn of that Monday morning inquiring faces peeped out at us from the windows of houses and from derrick doors. To get to Oil City before Wickham left was my one aim and purpose, and every other idea was banished from my head as we tore madly down the road.

It happened, however, that Wickham was also an early riser, for we met him just on the outskirts of the place. My heart went down into my boots, and I reasoned correctly that the "jig was up." Vainly I argued that he had better turn back, as I was going to Oil City on business, and while there we could draw up the papers and complete the deal. Whether he observed any traces of anxiety in my voice or face I do not know, but I do recall distinctly that he said, "No, let's go up and take a look at the well first."

The blow was struck right there, all thoughts of the fortune vanished suddenly, and with sadness I turned my horse around, and remarked, with all the steadiness I could master, "All right, I'll go back with you."

I went back. I never let him know that I was trying to take advantage of a little oversight in language to sell my interest in the well. In fact, I told him I was pleased to discover that the well had stopped flowing, before he turned over the money, and he did not know how happy it had made me that he had insisted on going to the lease before completing the agreement. Yet I must confess, happy as I was, I have had far happier moments in my life. Of course, the agreement was called off, and I compromised with my conscience as cheerfully as possible by writing one hundred thousand dollars in the column of losses.

The newspapers printed a report to the effect that I received two hundred thousand dollars for my interest in the well, which, in view of what actually occurred, was slightly misleading. However, it assisted in making

my burdens heavier, as many hundreds of people, believing I was animated with a sincere desire to part from my money, offered their services as separators, and I received enough proposals of marriage to have caused the most pronounced Mormon to drop dead from joy. The current report that the Hammond well flowed six hundred barrels a day was also wrong, but nearer the truth than the statement that I sold my interest in it.

In spite of the unsatisfactory outcome of the Hammond well transaction, Mr. Wickham remained in the neighborhood and paid me an occasional visit. He informed me that he was anticipating a trip to New York, and, as this was about the time I intended leaving for Philadelphia with my family, he gave me a very pressing invitation to accompany him to his home. This I accepted, and arranged that my people should follow me in a couple of days, when I would proceed with them to Philadelphia. Wickham seemed to take a great deal of interest in me; in fact, I thought treated me better than I deserved. Retaining a vivid recollection of the Ham-

mond well incident, I would have taken it as more appropriate if he had refused to consider that I was on earth. But later I came to a better understanding of his motives.

I went to New York with him, smoked his Havana cigars, played billiards with him, drank his good wines, and feasted sumptuously. The sights of the city interested me. Unlike my trip to Pittsburgh, I did not ride on the street cars, but in a stylish carriage driven by a coachman; and considered myself "It." Wickham introduced me to his friends as a smart young man and a great financier, but I could not guess the meaning unless he had reference to the team of horses which I had bought for six hundred dollars and sold for a thousand. I was so well pleased with this visit, that my mind was made up to see more of the doings of large cities, and I did. I was beginning to see the world outside of the narrow surroundings of my previous life, and it was a world which attracted me more and more.

My family joined me in New York, and we proceeded to Philadelphia. This was in June, 1864. Leaving my people with their

friends in the Quaker City, I returned to the oil regions, to see how matters were progressing. And it was on this trip to the Oil Creek farm that I discovered Seth R. Slocum.

Mouth of Oil Creek, next day after a pond freshet.

CHAPTER VI.

This man Slocum was a man of the world, without all the refinements that sometimes go with such a character. His home was in Erie, Pennsylvania, and he belonged to a most excellent family. There was nothing in his face or bearing to attract anyone, but he possessed a smooth tongue and an insidious manner, which enabled him to easily win the confidence of one as gullible as myself. The faculty of winning one's good will is a commendable one if used rightly, but is dangerous if it is not, and, as Slocum never showed any evidences to me of having a conscience, and as I became his willing follower, the result can be guessed.

I have seen people on the stage perform antics when under the control of hypnotic performers that they would not have performed, for any inducement, had they been in possession of their own will. And certain it is that under the spell of Slocum's influence I cut capers without the slightest protest or murmur that I never would have

thought of had I been left to my own sweet self.

I found Slocum at the farm when I arrived there from Philadelphia, and he informed me that he was in search of work. In this way our acquaintance began. The conversation led from one topic to another, and his ready tongue and patronizing manner, which so often prove attractive to those not experienced in the ways of the world, allayed any suspicion I might have had, and captured my imagination completely. In fact, I was not long in reaching the conclusion that Slocum was the best friend I had on earth, one who was solely animated with a desire for my welfare and happiness.

Therefore, when he volunteered to go to Philadelphia with me and "show me the town," at my expense, I considered he was doing me a great favor, and accepted his offer with pleasure, and agreed to pay the bills if he would perform his part of the agreement properly. I kept my agreement so far as I could, but Slocum's habits seemed to expand with age, as did my own, and when we were at the zenith of our career it kept a good healthy income busy to stay

anywhere near us. Slocum kept his part of the bargain faithfully; in fact, I sometimes thought he went farther than he had agreed to do.

Arriving in the Quaker City with my newly formed acquaintance, I stowed him away temporarily at the Girard House, and went to visit my family. I found the house in which they were stopping quarantined, and learned that my little boy was ill with the small-pox. Not being permitted to see him I returned to the hotel, and took up my quarters there, not feeling very cheerful over the dangerous illness of my son. However, in a few days he was reported out of danger, and having received news concerning my agent at the farm which seemed to justify a visit there, I started back, and took Slocum along. He went with me because he volunteered to accompany me, and would not listen to a refusal. He had possibly already found out that I was a "good thing" and did not wish to lose me. I installed a new agent at the farm, by the name of William Blackstone, and Slocum and I returned to Philadelphia. Then in October I took my people back to the farm.

It was on this trip to the old place that I next saw Wickham after our New York visit, and he agreed to purchase the farm outright for one million dollars. This I refused, and returned to Philadelphia, and rejoined Slocum. However, Wickham sought me out in Philadelphia and renewed his offer for the property, but again I refused him; but, after much bargaining, it was agreed that I would dispose of the farm to him for twelve hundred thousand dollars. Of this amount he paid me thirty thousand dollars spot cash, which was to represent the rental of the farm at the rate of five thousand dollars a month for six months, and, if at the end of said period I could make a clear deed to him, the thirty thousand dollars was to be considered as a part of the purchase price, and the balance of the twelve hundred thousand to be turned over to me.

Sometime previous to the making of this bargain Hamilton McClintock, a brother of Culbertson McClintock, my benefactor, had secured a lease on the farm which I had not ratified, and he had brought suit for the purpose of breaking the will of Culbertson Mc-

Clintock, by the provisions of which I had come into possession of the farm at Mrs. McClintock's death. Therefore, this suit at that time stood in the way of making a clear title, and it was necessary for me to wait until the litigation had been disposed of. In the meantime Wickham took the farm on the terms agreed, put his agent upon it, and operated it for his own benefit. It was also agreed that, if at the end of the six-month period I could not give a deed, the thirty thousand dollars was to be considered only as so much rental paid, and the farm was to come back to me. Otherwise, the balance of the money was to be paid to me by Wickham.

Therefore, all I could do was to wait. I was temporarily out of the oil business, and with thirty thousand dollars in my pocket and with Slocum at my side, I started out on a little "painting trip," all the time harboring pleasant anticipations of the greater amount of money to come in the future, beside of which the sum then in my possession was a mere bagatelle. The "beyond" looked rosy, and therefore Slocum and I in our enthusiasm began to sprinkle a little red

throughout the possibly at times sober precincts of Philadelphia. The money I had received from Wickham was deposited in the safe of the Girard House, in a private box generously (?) loaned to me by the proprietor. Having known of several disastrous results from depositing money in banks, I considered this a safe place for my wealth, as I carried the key. I never deposited any money in a bank in Philadelphia, reports to the contrary, notwithstanding.

As my transaction with Wickham occurred at the Girard House, it became known through generous advertising. On account of my youthful appearance I was stared at with a good deal of curiosity as the lucky possessor of millions, and I held regular receptions for those whose bank accounts were in a chronic or temporary state of depression. Chances came to me to purchase all kinds of property, to invest in all kinds of schemes, perpetual motion, and the like, and everyone seemed willing to unload upon me every "flash" company in creation, some of them doubtless gotten up for my especial benefit; some of them so transparently

crooked that I could see through them even when I was in a condition that would not have permitted me to walk a rope across Niagara. But I brushed all these offers to one side, and reached a conclusion to spend my money as best suited my taste and inclination.

It was at this time that I performed one of the greatest strokes of business of my career. It will give the reader of these pages an idea of the kind of a Napoleon of finance I was, and therefore I mention it. Possibly Jay Gould might have done better in his palmy days, but I doubt it. The stroke was this: I gave to Slocum a power-of-attorney so comprehensive and generous, that he could handle all my money, draw upon my "bank" account, and run bills in my name. I will do him credit by saying that, to the best of my knowledge, he never failed to carry out every one of the conditions of that power-of-attorney to the fullest extent. He exhibited the most untiring industry in that direction, and I could have given him a letter of recommendation to that effect at any time. He always spent money when he had it to spend, or when he did not, and be-

came expert in disposing of promises with great facility.

Slocum had an idea that in order to do things right, we should make the proper kind of a start. He argued that to see a couple of young millionaires walking around in ordinary clothing had a depressing effect on the spectators, and that we should have something more striking, and that better befitted our station in life.

Under his guidance we went to a tailor shop. We looked at the different patterns and grades of cloth presented for our inspection, some of which I thought pretty good, and I saw a number of patterns that would have suited me. But Slocum had his ideas up that day. After showing almost everything in the store, the tailor finally came to a piece of goods of a style that I considered would have looked well in a horse blanket for a blind horse. I thought, and do yet, that the tailor pulled out that piece of goods by mistake, or else showed it to us in order to scare us out of the store. But the pattern caught Socum's eye, and he gave an order for two suits to be made from it, one for him and one for myself, to

be constructed exactly alike. I told him that if we went out with a pattern like that we would be arrested for disturbing the peace of the city. But my partner was insistent, and the goods were purchased.

I shall never forget the pleasant afternoon when we sallied forth in our newly constructed suits. In addition we sported "stove-pipe" hats, carried gold-headed canes, and wore diamond pins in our neckties. Surely Solomon in all his glory was not fixed up like either one of us. As we stepped out on the street Slocum was smiling and confident, while I was trembling and afraid. The street seemed to take on a new appearance when we struck it, as people all turned and looked back, or followed us, and soon most all the traffic was going our way. On the corner of the street, a block or two above the hotel, a policeman was standing or was doing so until he saw us. Then he came towards us, and stopped in front of us, and when he informed us that we would have to go to the police station with him I was temporarily paralyzed. As soon as I could regain my equilibrium sufficiently to talk, my first words were to Slo-

cum, and I reminded him of what I had said, that if we appeared in that dog-gasted attire some dod-gasted cop would run us in. Slocum said nothing, but all the way to the police station he looked as crestfallen as a boy who has been discovered in the act of stealing jam. We were two surprised looking lambs as we stood facing the judge.

"Where did you get these fellows, officer?" inquired that personage.

"Shure, I picked 'em up down the strate," replied the minion of the law.

"What's the charge?"

"Bounty jumpin', yer Honor."

"Did anyone tell you to arrest them?"

"No, sir; I arrested them on their looks, and if them burruds aint bounty-jumpers what be they?"

We assured the magistrate that we were two innocent young men from the oil regions, who had been in town but a short time, and had never received any bounty to jump; that while we did not exactly know what kind of a bird a bounty-jumper was, no doubt the policeman had selected us because of our plumage; and if we could be

let off we would never do it again, whatever it was that we had done.

The judge took in the humor of the situation and discharged us. I "cussed" Slocum all the way to his room, and when we got there made him change his clothes. Then we ordered up drinks, celebrated our escape from the clutches of the law, and closed the wide chasm of disagreement.

CHAPTER VII.

As I have stated, the transaction with Wickham occurred at the Girard House, and it attracted much attention. Rumor followed rumor as to the amount involved, and it soon became an accepted belief that I had received a fortune amounting at least to a million of dollars. As a consequence, my credit became unbounded, as did the notoriety which arose out of the affair. I became the cynosure of a thousand curious eyes as the formerly poor boy who had suddenly become possessed of riches which a prince might envy; and I started on a course of living which can be accurately described as "fast." Many foolish things were attributed to me, of course, of which I was never guilty, but I was at best leading a life which rendered many of the untrue surmises justifiable. Many of Slocum's escapades were charged to my account, but we were so much together that this could not be considered strange, and certainly his foolish actions were backed up by my money

and credit. Therefore I cannot wholly blame those faraway critics who, through the magnifying of rumors, attributed outlandish actions to me as a spendthrift "oil prince" of mushroom growth. The flattery of pretended friends and the misrepresentations of the newspaper press, were not objected to by me so strenuously as in later years. In a kind of a way I enjoyed the "jollying" extended to me even by those who were engaged upon a "leg-pulling" expedition. In the dazzle and glitter which surrounded us Slocum fairly swam, and acted like a man who had been accustomed to such things all his life, conducted himself like a spoiled and pampered son of riches, and spent my money as freely as anyone could have spent it. The finest of clothes adorned our persons, diamond pins sparkled from our neckties, diamond rings glittered on our fingers, expensive gold chains encircled our necks and were attached to the most expensive gold watches. Similar articles were bestowed upon our friends. But these were mostly presented by Slocum, whose generosity was not even bounded by the size of my money roll.

Other misguided beings from the oil regions of Pennsylvania were scattered about the country doing foolish things, and many of their performances were afterwards credited to me. But as I had played the fool in so many directions, it was not strange that this was so, as possibly I was the "king-bee" of the oil region spendthrifts. I was not considered an "absorber" of wealth, but a "distributor," in the language of recent financial arguments. I sized up pretty well with the best, but have never been guilty of one-quarter of the foolish transactions that have been charged to my account; in fact, could not have mixed up in so many all at once. However, as it was, I did fairly well. While the original role of "Coal-Oil Johnny" was played by me, to have acted it in all the comedies, and possibly tragedies, in which that was the star part, would have required me to project myself into a dozen or more places at the same time. It may be as well to state that at this writing I am alive, in spite of the fact that I have been killed several times. While I circulated at a pretty lively gait, and largely in my own particular or-

bit, still I was only one. My nickname seemed to have been catching, and was conjured with by writers whose fanciful imaginations overbalanced their regard for facts. But the ball was set rolling, and it gathered all kinds of "Coal-Oil Johnny" moss.

The first time I ever heard the name was one day in Philadelphia, and it was applied to me by a dirty-faced street gamin, who possibly never realized for how much he has been responsible. Three friends and myself were being driven back from the races to our hotel. Not having had a drink since we left the track, we were overtaken by a consuming thirst, and were urging the driver to do his best to get us to the hotel in order to save our lives. The rapid beat of the hoofs upon the pavement, and the rattle of the carriage, attracted the attention of those unfortunate ones who were compelled to walk. Seeing our carriage filled with four sporty-looking individuals, wearing high hats and diamond-bedecked apparel, it was but natural that someone's curiosity should be aroused to the extent of asking who we were. Turning a corner slowly, I

heard someone ask, "Isn't that the coal-oil crowd?" and an insignificant urchin piped up, "Yep, that's Coal-Oil Johnny and his gang." The other occupants of our carriage also caught the remark. It seemed to please them, for they adopted it there and then, and fastened the term upon me for good. In this way was started a name that has stuck to me closer than a brother, and was destined to be bandied about wherever the English language was spoken.

Outside of our personal appearance on this occasion of my christening, doubtless our carriage attracted attention, and in planning the vehicle, Slocum and I determined that it should. In the first place we felt the great need of a carriage of some kind, for, on many accounts, it was not always convenient to walk. On concluding to have one of our own, we resolved it should possess some distinctive feature that would mark it from the usual run of stylish turnout, and compel people to recognize it at a glance as our own particular property.

I had read that somewhere it was the custom of people to display a coat-of-arms to mark the distinguishing achievements and occupations of their family. Therefore, I

concluded to try something of this kind myself. My idea was not so much to boast of any achievements of former generations as to show off my own business and attainments. So Slocum and I put our heads together and decided the best thing in this line to be done was to have painted on the doors of our vehicle the picture of an oil derrick, an oil tank, and a flowing well. We found a painter who knew how to mix colors and put in the proper amount of red. The carriage had cost me sixteen hundred dollars. We had been painting everything else red, and we did not wish to take any chances with sober colors. The artist adorned the doors to our liking. When we saw the result of his work we could hardly wait for the paint to dry. But finally when, with our new team of horses, we were at last driven forth, with instructions given to the driver to "go slow," the sensation created was only equalled by our gratification that we had made the hit of the hour. The only experience we had had which equalled it was when we appeared in those flashy suits. But this time we escaped arrest. How it happened we never knew. In our

new outfit we shone for all there was in it, and we did not care who knew it, as we were prouder of that carriage and its coat-of-arms than Barnum ever was of a carload of monkeys. I felt better than any old king ever did in his chariot. The only regret was that the folks up home could not see me, and I wished that some of the boys from the oil regions could come down so that I could give them a ride. In my time I have seen many carriages, but, to my mind they were all commonplace in comparison with the one owned by me. It was the only one of the kind, when the coat-of-arms was included, in the Quaker City at that time. It has never been duplicated, and I do not know how it could be.

We hired a man to care for our horses and our carriage for a stated amount, I forget the sum; but it was large enough, no doubt. The driver was a willing fellow, at any rate, and devoted himself entirely to us and our interests; and we often felt sore need of that devotion. His working hours were irregular, but mainly during the night and 'way along in the A. M.s. He knew how to handle men as well as horses, for he was

often compelled to handle us, and his responsibility often became great along toward the wee small hours. Our carriage was a familiar sight "down the line," and wherever it was, it was a safe guess that we were in it, or, at least, not far away.

CHAPTER VIII.

Given an inexperienced young fellow with a good-sized bank account, a willing and earnest desire to see the world, and include in this combination a thirst for liquor, and fasten on to this same fellow companions who are consumed with a desire to further his ambitions along the lines indicated, and you have a result that has thrown many an older head than I had at that time off the track. So, of course, I did many foolish things, some of which I look back to to-day with regret, and I presume I performed many outlandish tricks which I do not now remember, because of their being acted at times when John Barleycorn held me in an "extra loving grip."

I do recall distinctly, however, that one of our principal amusements was theatre-going. The play-house possessed attractions which I never could resist, and I became very familiar with life therein. It was to me a new world, and naturally possessed attractions for one who never until

going to the city had seen anything more pretentious than a district school exhibition or a "Punch and Judy" show.

I was to be found many nights with my friends occupying a box at Fox's Casino, a famous resort of its kind, conducted on Bohemian principles, where a man was not obliged to crawl over a crowd to procure liquid refreshments, and where we could enjoy our fragrant Havanas while we sat and watched the gyrations of the ballet girls. Of course, such a resort appealed strongly to our temperaments and we frequented it more than any of the others then to be found in Philadelphia.

Carncross & Dixie's Minstrels had quite a run in Philadelphia at this time, and I always enjoyed listening to the comical sayings of Dixie and Simmons, spurred on by Carncross, one of the finest of interlocutors. I became well acquainted with Dixie, who associated somewhat with our crowd, and I recall him as a jolly, good-natured, little fellow, and a great favorite with everyone. But of this aggregation I came to know Lew Simmons best of all, and liked him for his

unceasing jollity, exhibited in private as well as in public. The memory of my friendship with him is more closely treasured by me than any which I formed during this giddy and delirious period.

One of our favorite means of recreation during the daytime was a drive in our famous carriage through Fairmount Park, where we vied in conspicuousness with the elite of the city; in fact, attracted more attention than the most of them. Our faces were familiar at many of the road-houses surrounding Philadelphia at that time, where we distributed liberal patronage. Generally after these drives we would wind up at the Girard House in the evening in a "highly-seasoned" condition. Naturally, at this time memory of places and dates is somewhat dimmed, and would be, even if I had at that time kept my vision entirely clear, but as it was considerably blurred by alcoholic methods, it is not surprising that I do not retain anything more than a faint recollection, extending in many instances not beyond the fact that I recall that Philadelphia was on the map, and I was mixed up in it somewhere.

I have often regretted that I did not keep a record of places, occurrences, and dates, but the thought never entered my mind that I was making any kind of history, and, anyway, I was too busy to attend to it. Never did I for a moment realize that I was achieving a notoriety that some day would be widespread, and that my name would be one to be conjured with by special writers and paragraphers for a generation. But one of my chief regrets at overlooking the importance of such a record is that I have forgotten the name of the house and its proprietor where the specialty on the bill of fare was the prosaic-sounding dish of "catfish and waffles." I recall that it was a road-house somewhere in the vicinity of Philadelphia, and on an average of once a week we would visit it and regale our appetites with these delectable viands. It is providential that time dims the vision to many things of the past, but to-day I would thank my stars if I could publicly pay tribute to the name of the man who served catfish and waffles as the leading feature of his bill of fare. I ate of them until I broke out with a rash, gorged myself near to bursting,

and never grew tired of the diet. Syrup I had long ago given the "go-by" and I did not regain my youthful liking for it, but I never grew weary of the fish and waffle mixture. These feasts stand out in glaring spots on the memory of that hazy and delirious period. The catfish is the most delicious morsel that swims our waters, not much to look at, perhaps, but in the hands of the caterer he becomes a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

A Philadelphian who attached himself to our crowd at this time, through an acquaintanceship he had formed with Slocum, was George Brotherton, who besides being one of the handsomest and most stylishly dressed men I had ever known, was an expert and nervy wooer of fortune with cards. In fact, he was an adept at every game of chance played in America at that day. Possessing a pleasing manner and the bearing of a gentleman, I became attracted to him and liked him first rate. In every sense of the word he was a better fellow than Slocum and filled with more manly instincts, in spite of the calling to which he claimed allegiance. It takes a bright man to become even a fairly

successful gambler, and Brotherton had a knowledge of men and the ways of the world which would have brought him success in life had he chosen a legitimate occupation. He was a partner, although largely a silent one, in an all-night saloon in Philadelphia which drove a thriving trade in wet goods, and to which place we often resorted to slake our ever-recurring thirst, especially when our finances became temporarily depressed, for there our names would accommodatingly be written down "upon the slate." Brotherton made a great deal of money by gambling, but spent it just as freely, and as a result of such a condition was often in a state of financial collapse. Consequently he knew how to sympathize with others who would occasionally "go broke" and come to their assistance when in his power so to do.

I recall that at one time as I was walking with him along the street, he mentioned the fact that there was a first-rate faro game being dealt in rooms near by, and he confided to me that he felt an inward "hunch" that he could play to win, but that, unfortunately, he was temporarily out of funds.

At that particular moment I was in straits for the long green myself, but glancing across the street and seeing a pawn shop, I went over and put up my gold watch for twenty dollars, the amount Brotherton said he needed. I handed the money to him, and together we went to the rooms, he to play and I to watch the game. Fortune did not smile upon the player until he was reduced to the last dollar of the twenty; but with that dollar the "hunch" seemed to get in its work, for Brotherton called the last turn on the deal, and received four for one. He then began to win steadily, more rapidly than he had lost, and in half an hour from the turning point he quit the game a thousand dollars to the good. The watch was relieved from its imprisonment, restored to my pocket, and we went out to spend the winnings, which we succeeded in doing in the most approved style.

The loud, rowdy, and spendthrift ways of my erstwhile self-appointed guardian and authorized agent were well known, and, coupled with outlandish reports of great wealth which had come to me, jewelers, tail-

ors, and other dealers, were led to send in bills many times larger than they actually should have been, and once seeing them paid without protest the next time would add a little more commission. In this manner much money was foolishly paid out, which, had I used ordinary business caution, and placed less faith in Slocum, would have been saved.

Ours was a riotous, feverish life, with scarcely a sober moment, and to a large extent we knew not what we did, nor did we seem to care. The fool-killer favored us by remaining religiously away at this particular period, and diamonds bedecked the persons of those who would not have been so favored had we not been allowed to live.

No one was allowed by Slocum to approach me whom he thought could possibly render such advice as would imperil the good time he was having at my expense. No one borrowed money from me at this time unless it happened to be a friend of his; and the crowd which surrounded me consisted largely of actors, men about town, so-called, gamblers, and young fellows whose only occupation seemed to be to spend the money

left them by some saving and economical ancestor. There were also adventurers hanging around, who looked upon me at all times as a lamb well worth shearing. Everyone who stopped at the Girard House tried to get a glimpse of me, and, it sometimes seemed, a slice of my roll, and I was pointed out to the curious as the "oil prince" who was creating the sensation of the hour in his own peculiar way. At first I shrank from this curiosity but afterwards got so I did not care, and with a cigar in my mouth, with diamonds sparkling on my shirt front and on my fingers, I would march up and down the corridors, the cynosure of admiring glances. The "help" of the hotel would jump at my word, for I was always lavish with my tips for the most trivial service. Therefore, by outward appearance, at least, I fully justified many of the inferences drawn of me at that time. Never had I known before what it was to be surrounded by a crowd of flatterers and I was not sufficiently acute to detect the reason or to pick out the sycophants. Consequently I was placed upon a pedestal and worshipped for "what there was in it," and in return for flattering

praises spent my money freely upon my admirers.

As I have stated, I drank a great deal. Whiskey more strongly appealed to my appetite than any other liquor, and finding this appetite harder to appease as time went on, I contributed largely towards the revenues of the government. Money went freely through my hands, still more freely through Slocum's and, in that brief six months of delirium in Philadelphia and other cities, I lived longer than in all the balance of my time on earth.

Occasionally some old friend from the oil country would visit me, when I would consider it my bounden duty to extend to him the kind of hospitality for which I was becoming celebrated. What such a one told when he got home I do not know, but if he told the truth, tales were related at oil country firesides such as were never listened to before.

CHAPTER IX.

What is the gait of Philadelphia to-day among the class of people with whom we associated I do not know, but at that time they stayed out later at night and traveled swifter than the Quakers, and their manners were such as would have black-balled them for admission into the Society of Friends. The city, as were many other cities at that time, was filled with strangers owing to the great war then being waged. Palaces of sin were in full blast and in many quarters the clinking of glasses, the maudlin songs, the shrieks of siren and masculine laughter could be heard throughout the night.

Gambling resorts were numerous, where unwary lambs were parted from their fleece; but I did not part with mine by this method. Certain writers have stated that I lost thousands of dollars by the turn of a card, while the truth is I never played for money in my life. However, my chances for doing so were unlimited; I consorted with gamblers to some extent, and frequented gamb-

ling rooms; but while urgent invitations were extended to me to woo fickle fortune in this manner, I refused to do so, arguing that I preferred to spend my money in a way which would be more productive of enjoyment to a man of my tastes. I have often regretted that my refusal did not extend to other invitations the acceptance of which proved detrimental and contributed to my final undoing.

At one time I went into the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia and asked a question of the clerk, to which he returned an uncivil answer. This displeased me, and I filed a protest with the proprietor, who did not give me the satisfaction I sought. Being somewhat nettled thereat, I ventured the opinion that "he did not know a d——d thing about running a hotel." He replied that possibly I knew more than he did about it and that I could offer him suggestions that would relieve his guests from the results of his mismanagement. I told him I thought I could, and this encouraged me to further ask how much he would charge me to take the "old ranch" off his hands for a day and run it as it should be run. Evidently thinking I was

throwing out a large-sized bluff, he replied, "Two thousand dollars." Reaching into my pocket I pulled out my roll, counted out the amount, and threw it down on the desk, and told him to consider the old "shebang" as mine until noon of the next day. He wanted to back out but I protested, and he finally withdrew and left the field to me. My first move was to discharge the offensive clerk, and I put into his place one of my friends. I placed others over various departments, and issued a general order to the effect that everything should be run wide open for twenty-four hours; that every delicacy the market afforded should be placed upon the table, regardless of expense, and my directions were explicit that champagne, or whatever else the bar afforded, should be furnished free to the guests who dined with us. Every other hotel in Philadelphia was thrown into a condition of temporary depression, which would have meant suspension had my plan continued indefinitely. I rewarded each of the servants with twenty-five dollars, in advance, and asked for their hearty co-operation and it was heartily given. My friends, their friends, and all of

our friends' friends pressed in upon me, and as landlord I welcomed them with all the cordiality and dignity I could muster. The women of the "tenderloin," hearing that I was running the hotel, crowded in, and soon the building was resounding to shouts of revelry. The Brussels carpets were soaked with champagne, long and gaudy stockings adorned the chandeliers, while their owners danced on the marble-topped tables of the parlors surrounded by a drunken mob, or sat on the window sills and shrieked to the people who thronged the streets below. Guests who were drunken beyond the realms of consciousness were strewn about the floors, their features looking extremely grewsome in the light of the chandeliers. The devil ran riot throughout that palace of sin, and orgies were enacted which approached those of Belshazzar's feast. It was a grand, whirling, awful time; too wicked to be believed.

And yet there were thousands of people who believed it, although it never happened. I have tried to condense all that has been said by various writers who have attributed this occurrence to me. I give it as a sort of

tribute to the great American imagination, and as showing to what extent some people will go when wielding an unbridled pen. Some day I want to erect a monument to the man who concocted that story. If I catch him alive, he will need something to mark his resting place.

Of course there was never such an occurrence. I never bought a hotel for a day, minute or second. I never stayed in the Continental Hotel but one night, and no such scene ever occurred in Philadelphia during my sojourn there. However, it might be stated that I spent enough money at the Girard House, or was charged with having spent enough, to have purchased a controlling interest in a first-class hotel. When leaving there the proprietor presented me with a bill for myself and Slocum, of $19,000. Considering the fact that I paid him large amounts at various times, I naturally wondered how it could be so large. Yet, assuming it to be correct, I figured that our bill at this one house alone for the six months in Philadelphia exceeded $25,000. This speaks louder of our career in the Quaker City than anything else I can mention.

The only "time" I ever had at the Continental was in that part reserved for the dispensing of liquid refreshments. As has been noticed by everyone, intoxication develops strange characteristics in individuals. A surly man will be changed into the most genial soul in the world, while a man who in sober life is the incarnation of geniality will be converted into the most offensive belligerant, and want to fight everybody he meets. Some, with no music in their souls, will break out in song and the clumsiest will insist on tripping the "light fantastic toe." When I reached a certain stage, my nature took on the hat-smashing mania, and I tried or wanted to smash every high hat that came to my notice. One night I was with a party of friends in the Continental bar. It happened that we all wore high hats, and it also happened that, while we were drinking and swearing eternal fealty, my mania asserted itself. Seizing a cane, I rapped the hat of the fellow next to me down over his eyes. This seemed so funny that I jammed the hat of another fellow so hard that it completely covered his face, and he was pulled out with considerable trouble. By this time all of the

crowd entered into the spirit of the thing. One of them struck at my hat, and, thinking to fool him, I removed it just in time to catch his cane on my head in the most emphatic manner. For some reason or other the crowd seemed to think the joke was on me. When we had finished we possessed a collection of the most dilapidated-looking "dicers" ever seen, and resembled a group of shabby genteel wrecks. But we stayed in the bar until it was reported dry. The next day I purchased a new $8.00 hat for each one of the crowd. The foregoing escapade, of course, attracted attention and possibly from it originated the Ananias story of the purchase of the hotel. I only purchased the liquor. It reminds me of the little line reading

"Tall aches from little toe-corns grow."

CHAPTER X.

So many demands were made upon me for loans of money from all sections of the country, both personally and by mail, that I soon became hardened to them, and refused all applicants point blank, except in the case of a few personal friends who sought temporary loans. To the latter I always responded favorably when I could, but in many instances found my confidence misplaced. To have responded to all my mail would have required a large force of clerks. When anyone came in person for a loan I listened to their tale of woe, and acted according to the best judgment I happened to have with me at the time.

Among those who came to me with schemes which afforded me an opportunity to invest my money were Low Gaylord and M. T. Skiff (the boys called him "Empty" Skiff), minstrel men, who had been conducting an organization under the title of Skiff and Gaylord's Minstrels, and which, after running through a season of hard luck,

had become stranded. They were filled with a desire to get once again upon their feet, and therefore the appeal to me for financial assistance.

To one who viewed the stage with the liking I did, the proposition made by them proved attractive and appealed to me strongly. Consequently Slocum and I agreed to take a half interest, but as the former had no money which was not mine, half of the show really belonged to me. Skiff and Gaylord owned the costumes and much other material that goes with a burnt-cork aggregation, but money was required to re-organize and rehearse a company, and to put out new advertising. With the money I furnished wood cuts were purchased and bills printed which set forth in glaring letters and in flattering terms the merits of the show. One of the large posters had a picture of Slocum and myself in the upper left and right hand corners, respectively, while in the lower corners appeared the pictures of Skiff and Gaylord.

The company was soon organized, placed in rehearsal, the advance agent started out upon the road, and the show moved up into

New Jersey to win shekles and gather up a bunch of fame.

It was a good show, as many who saw it at the time will testify. Skiff was interlocutor, while Gaylord played the bones and Hughey Dougherty the tambo. At the present time I do not recall the names of all the performers who, including the band, numbered about twenty people, but among the crowd were Delehanty and Ward, a fine double clog team, and Joe Maires, the best female impersonator I ever saw. The leader of the band was a little Dutchman by the name of Buckholz, who was certainly an artist. But the great fun maker of the aggregation was Dougherty, who in his time has made thousands of people laugh at his original and irresistible humor. At this time he was a young man, just rising in his calling. He took to the business like a duck to water; and his constant comicalities off the stage were as amusing as those he sprung behind the footlights. His fun was of that spontaneous kind which made him appear to do and say the right thing at the right time, and he was very apt at hitting off popular fads and follies as they ap-

peared. He was a good dancer, and one night, feeling in a particular happy condition, he danced for thirty-five minutes, until he was dripping with perspiration and the orchestra had become exhausted. Whenever the musicians would show any inclination to stop, he would spur them on. The audience became uproarious and urged the contestants to further efforts. Another of Dougherty's acts was a stump speech, the delivery of which always convulsed the hearers. He appeared dressed in the burlesque style of an old fashioned colored preacher, wearing a high hat of ancient mintage, a long coat, and carrying a large umbrella. Each night the speech would be varied to suit local conditions or national happenings and was as much enjoyed by his colleagues as by the audience. Walking up to the table in the centre of the stage, he would place his hat upon it, and as he proceeded with his remarks he would gradually work himself up to a feigned state of intense earnestness and excitement. Then he would raise his umbrella ostensibly to bring it down upon the table to emphasize his remarks, and miss the table, which mis-

calculation would appear to throw him off his balance, and compel him to turn a complete somersault in order to regain his equilibrium. Excusing himself to the audience for this undignified action, he would proceed with his remarks, slowly at first, and then gradually work himself up to another pitch of excitement, when he would bring his umbrella down upon his hat with a violence sufficient to smash it flat. Picking it up he would look at the wreck so ludicrously that his audience would shriek with laughter; and, although I saw him do this many times, it always drew a smile from me. Dougherty certainly was one of the smartest men in the business, and when I saw him last he was still maintaining his reputation for jollity, although then an old man.

Slocum and I did not appear in the performance, but confined our duties to the taking and selling of tickets, and marching with our partners at the head of the daily parade. As I marched to the stirring notes of the band, dressed in the regulation high hat, long coat, and carrying a cane, while diamonds sparkled upon my necktie and

upon my fingers, for the time being I was oblivious of everything else, and secretly thought I was one of the great moguls of the earth, whom ordinary mortals would be more than pleased to fall down and worship.

The aggregation started from the Quaker City in good style and spirits, and played up through New Jersey to good houses. Slocum and I stayed with them for a week, showed them a good time whenever opportunity presented, and opportunities were plentiful. It was a howling, whirling week. Our ordinary expenses were paid out of the funds which came from the treasury, and this was the only financial benefit we ever received from the venture. The extraordinary expenses, a much larger sum, I paid myself, and thought all the while I was having a jolly good time. However, we did not drink champagne, some accounts to the contrary, notwithstanding. I began my "spiritual" education on whiskey, and when one becomes thoroughly addicted to that habit, every other drink seems mild and tame in comparison.

So while the merry minstrel men went their happy way, my partner and myself be-

sought once more the quiet precincts of Philadelphia, and the haunts which had known us so long, for better and for worse, did business with us again. We took up the old ways without the slightest hesitation, picked up where we had left off, and continued the little act of our own entitled, "A fool and his money are soon parted," in which we played star parts to large crowds. We charged no admission, and generally paid the crowd for coming to see us. In fact, we ran a regular gift show, and it was a continuous performance.

I give the following from "Sketches in Crude Oil," an entertaining book on the Oil regions written by John J. McLaurin, in which he quotes an interview given by one John W. Gaylord concerning me, and which is a fair sample of some of the reports put in circulation about my doings:

"The future candidate for minstrel gags and newspaper space was hauling oil when a neighbor ran to tell him of Mrs. McClintock's death. He hastened home. A search of the premises disclosed two hundred thousand dollars the old lady had hoarded. Wm. Blackstone, appointed his guardian, restrict-

ed the minor to a reasonable allowance. The young man's conduct was irreproachable until he attained his majority. His income was enormous. Mr. Blackstone paid him three hundred thousand dollars in a lump, and he resolved to 'see some of the world.' He saw it, not through smoked glass either. His escapades supplied no end of material for gossip. Many tales concerning him were exaggerated and many were pure inventions. Demure, slow-going Philadelphia he colored a flaming vermilion. He gave away carriages after a single drive, kept open house in a big hotel and squandered thousands of dollars a day. Seth Slocum was 'showing him the sights' and he fell an easy victim to blacklegs and swindlers. He ordered champagne by the dozen baskets and treated theatrical companies to the costliest wine suppers. Gay ballet girls at Fox's old play-house told spicy stories of these midnight frolics. To a negro comedian, who sang a song that pleased him, he handed a thousand dollar pin. He would walk the streets with bank bills stuck in the button-holes of his coat for Young America to grab. He courted club men and spent

cash like the Count of Monte Cristo. John Morrissey sat a night with him at cards in his Saratoga gambling house, cleaning him out of many thousands. Leeches bled him and sharpers fleeced him unmercifully. He was a spendthrift, but he didn't light cigars with hundred dollar bills, buy a Philadelphia hotel to give a chum or destroy money 'for fun.' Usually somebody benefited by his extravagances.

"Occasionally his prodigality assumed a sensible phase. Twenty-eight hundred dollars, one day's receipts from his wells and royalty, went toward the erection of the soldiers' monument—a magnificent shaft of white marble—in the Franklin park. Except Dan Rice's five thousand dollar memorial at Girard, Erie county, this was the first monument in the Union to the fallen heroes of the civil war. Ten, twenty or fifty dollars frequently gladdened the poor who asked for relief. He lavished fine clothes and diamonds on a minstrel troupe, touring the country and entertaining crowds in the oil regions. John W. Gaylord, a famous artist in burnt cork and member of the troupe, has furnished these details:

"'Yes, "Coal-Oil Johnny" was my particular friend in his palmiest days. I was his room-mate when he cut the shines that celebrated him as the most eccentric millionaire on earth. I was with the Skiff and Gaylord minstrels. Johnny saw us perform in Philadelphia, got stuck on the business and bought one-third interest in the show. His first move was to get five thousand dollars' worth of woodcuts at his own expense. They were all the way from a one-sheet to a twenty-four-sheet in size and the largest amount any concern had ever owned. The cartoon, which attracted so much attention, of "Bring That Skiff Over Here," was in the lot. We went on the road, did a monstrous business everywhere, turned people away and were prosperous.

"'Reaching Utica, N. Y., Johnnie treated to a supper for the company, which cost one thousand dollars. He then conceived the idea of traveling by his own train and purchased an engine, a sleeper and a baggage-car. Dates for two weeks were cancelled and we went junketing, Johnnie footing the bills. At Erie we had a five hundred dollar supper; and so it went. It was here that

View of Oil Creek from Steele Farm. Looking towards Rynd Farm.

Johnnie bought his first hack. After a short ride he presented it to the driver. Our dates being cancelled, Johnnie insisted upon indemnifying us for the loss of time. He paid all salaries, estimated the probable business receipts upon the basis of packed houses and paid that also to our treasurer.

"'In Chicago he gave another exhibition of his eccentric traits. He leased the Academy of Music for the season and we did a big business. Finally he proposed a benefit for Skiff and Gaylord and sent over to rent the Crosby Opera House, then the finest in the country. The manager sent back the insolent reply: "We won't rent our house for an infernal nigger show." Johnnie got warm in the collar. He went down to their office in Root and Cady's music store.

"'"What will you take for your house and sell it outright?" he asked Mr. Root.

"'"I don't want to sell."

"'"I'll give you a liberal price. Money is no object."

"'Then Johnnie pulled out a roll from his valise, counted out two hundred thousand dollars and asked Root if that was an object. Mr. Root was thunderstruck. "If you are

that kind of a man you can have the house for the benefit free of charge." The benefit was the biggest success ever known in minstrelsy. The receipts were forty-five thousand dollars and more were turned away than could be given admission. Next day Johnnie hunted up one of the finest carriage horses in the city and presented it to Mr. Root for the courtesy extended.

"'Oh, Johnnie was a prince with his money. I have seen him spend as high as one hundred thousand dollars in one day. That was the time he hired the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia and wanted to buy the Girard House. He went to the Continental and politely said to the clerk: "Will you please tell the proprietor that J. W. Steele wishes to see him?" "No sir," said the clerk, "the landlord is busy." Johnnie suggested he could make it pay the clerk to accommodate the whim. The clerk became disdainful and Johnnie tossed a bell-boy a twenty-dollar gold piece with the request. The result was an interview with the landlord. Johnnie claimed he had been ill-treated and requested the summary dismissal of the clerk. The proprietor refused and

Johnnie offered to buy the hotel. The man said he could not sell, because he was not the entire owner. A bargain was made to lease it for one day for eight thousand dollars. The cash was paid over and Johnnie installed as landlord. He made me bell-boy, while Slocum officiated as clerk. The doors were thrown open and every guest in the house had his fill of wine and edibles free of cost. A huge placard was posted in front of the hotel: "Open house to-day; everything free; all are welcome!" It was a merry lark. The whole city seemed to catch on and the house was full. When Johnnie thought he had had fun enough he turned the hostelry over to the landlord, who reinstated the odious clerk. Here was a howdedo. Johnnie was frantic with rage. He went over to the Girard and tried to buy it. He arranged with the proprietor to "buck" the Continental by making the prices so low that everybody would come there. The Continental did mighty little business so long as the arrangement lasted.

" 'The day of the hotel transaction we were up on Arch street. A rain setting in, Johnnie approached a hack in front of a fashion-

able store and tried to engage it to carry us up to the Girard. The driver said it was impossible, as he had a party in the store. Johnnie tossed him a five hundred dollar bill and the hackman said he would risk it. When we arrived at the hotel Johnnie said: "See here, Cabby, you're a likely fellow. How would you like to own that rig?" The driver thought he was joking, but Johnnie handed him two thousand dollars. A half hour later the delighted driver returned with the statement that the purchase had been effected. Johnnie gave him a thousand more to buy a stable and that man to-day is the wealthiest hack-owner in Philadelphia.'"

Some of the above is true. However, I never cancelled dates of the troupe and paid their expenses while they were "doing time;" I never bought or leased an opera house in Chicago; I never spent one hundred thousand dollars in a day; I never hired a hotel; I never bought a carriage on the street and gave it away after a ride around the town. My actions were bad enough, but, fortunately, I did miss performing some of the freak things which cer-

tain writers have laid to my account. How I missed them, I do not exactly know, but miss them I did. When reading an article such as the above, one feels somewhat like a man does who has fooled people to the extent of getting his obituary into print before he dies, and reads it in the newspapers. Those of my readers who have passed through that experience will, I am sure, sympathize with the feelings I had when I read such an article as the above. The writer of the book, however, kindly corrects some of the sentiments in the article which he pens. It is true that I did not destroy money for fun, but I literally threw it away, and had what I thought was fun as a recompense.

I never made the acquaintance of the Hon. John Morrisey, never played at cards with a stranger, and, as I have heretofore stated, never played for money at any time. And I am truly grateful to this author for denying the old statement that I used hundred dollar bills for cigar lighters. I believe I did make a liberal subscription to the soldiers' monument in the city of Franklin, Pa.

Another writer circulated the report that I lost my Meadville property in a game of

cards with Dan Fowler. While it is true that certain parties were instrumental in separating me from my Crawford County possessions, it was not accomplished by the card method; although now I would look back with more favor upon the transaction, and regard it as having been more honorable, had that way been employed instead of the one which was used.

There were two games for which I had a passion, namely, pin-pool and billiards. I walked enough of miles around a billiard table to have qualified as a favorite in a six-day walking contest, and spent many dollars upon the pastime before placing myself outside the limit of what is known as an "easy mark." As stated, this education cost me something before I ceased to be entirely "it," and before I could sport around a table and play and talk for the edification of the crowd as well as some other fellow. All of which leads me to observe that if you want a dead open-and-shut index to a fellow's character, notice his actions and listen to his conversation and remarks while he is engaged in pushing the ivories over a billiard table. He may be a fairly decent and sens-

ible fellow in ordinary affairs, but if he has any weak spots in his make-up, he will show them if he thinks a crowd is watching him while he is at play, especially if he is at all impressed with his ability as a cue-shover. In fact, men have been known to swear while playing billiards who would not swear at their wives.

Some people might consider it an honor to have a brand of soap named after them. But somehow or other I never liked it, especially when the manufacturer issued a pamphlet purporting to give some of my escapades as they were represented in the daily press. I never considered that they were justified in libelling me even for the purpose of exploiting a brand of soap. But doubtless, like many other pirates, they considered that I had no feelings which anyone was bound to respect.

CHAPTER XI.

While my partner and myself clung closely to our adopted city of Philadelphia, we frequently varied our life by a trip to adjoining towns. The cities of Washington, Baltimore, Cleveland and New York and many others, were favored financially by visits from us, for in each of these places we strove to part from some of our "unearned increment." But we never stayed for any great length of time away from our Quaker City haunts. In that place we had our friends, such as they were, and the people having become accustomed to our "rough and rowdy ways," did not gaze at us with the curiosity that met us at other places. Another evidence of fame that came to me at this time was a letter from a circus man, in which he held out glittering inducements to me to travel with his combination and exhibit myself as a sort of freak. I treated the offer, however, with all the scorn I could muster, and informed him that I was engaged in running a little show

of my own, which, in certain ways, at least, was a complete and howling success. I had no desire to sit by the side of the fat lady or the tattooed man and be pointed out as the untamed rooster from the oil regions.

When Slocum and myself had carried out most of the foolish ideas which we had been able to conjure up, we cudgeled our brain for something new. We did not want to feel stale. Therefore in one of our fits of idiocy we decided that two young men of our tendencies should branch out into the horse-racing business. Slocum was the first to broach the idea, and I was so much elated over it that I invited him to a continuous performance at the bar. We decided that no "common scrub" would suffice for us; we must have a horse that would make all others resemble "thirty cents" as he would trot down the home stretch; an animal that would make his owners famous wherever the trotting horse was known. And the race track, which had heretofore only recognized us as gay and festive spectators, should now look upon us as important factors in the racing annals of the country.

Therefore I started out to find an animal

that would answer our expectations. As soon as people found out what I was after, I was offered all kinds of bargains in the horse line, in the shape of "comers," "wasers," et cetera, but I informed every one that I was looking for an "iser." As I was in a condition that would as likely lead me to buy a saw-horse as a sure enough equine of flesh and blood, I was liable to be misled; but at last I found a horse that seemed to please my fancy. It had always been a sort of belief of mine that I could tell by looking at a horse's ears the kind of a disposition he possessed. But I must say that this animal upset all my notions of horse physiogomy completely. He had a sort of melting look which seemed to imply plainly that he would do his best under all circumstances, in fact an animal that one could tie to. I afterwards found that this was true to the extent that anything that horse was tied to was perfectly safe. His was not a disturbing disposition. He was guaranteed sound of limb and wind, and this was true. He certainly had all the wind capacity which his speed called for.

We purchased him and placed him in the

hands of a trainer out at the track, to whom we afterwards referred as "our trainer," and grew an inch every time we did so. The horse was a pacer, but I have forgotten his name. I started out deliberately to do so after the first race.

Having placed him in the hands of "our trainer," Slocum and I visited the track at Point Breeze almost every day to see him "go." We were all wrapped up in him. All by himself he could go, or seemed to go, faster than any horse we had ever seen. Therefore we entered him in races and lived in great anticipation of the events. In our minds we could see him come thundering down the track and covering us with fame and his driver with mud at one and the same time. However, it came to pass that the horse could go fast enough by himself, but in the company of others he developed a shrinking disposition—shirking, Slocum called it. With other animals around, he appeared exclusive and backward—way backward. He would retire within himself when most was expected of him. If the driver had been aware of this, he kept it to himself. From his standpoint it would

have been poor finance for him to have given it away.

On the evening preceding the race we went out to take a final look at our pet; saw to it that he was properly blanketed and bandaged; and we drove home with pleasant anticipations for the morrow. Our driver was confident, the horse seemed so, and consequently so were we. We returned to the city, toasted the horse for several hours and retired to dream horse dreams.

On the afternoon of the race, Slocum drove one of the horses which we owned, to a road wagon, and I hitched the other one of the team to a sulky. I must have created a sensation. To see a fellow wearing a high hat, sitting on a sulky, smoking a cigar, and driving along the street, must have been an edifying spectacle to those who witnessed it, a sort of reminder of the eternal fitness of things. But I wanted to appear sporty that day, and I was not at all disappointed with myself.

There was a large crowd at the track, and Slocum and I congratulated ourselves that so many had come out to see our horse. Slocum at first, in his enthusiasm, suggested

that we treat the whole crowd, but I finally compromised with him by asking him to take a drink with me. Our driver told us that he was confident the horse would make a record for himself; and he certainly did.

The time for "our race" arrived finally. As certain horses would appear, they would be cheered by their admirers. When our pet trotted out, or paced out, the crowd seemed stunned, for no sound was heard except the hip-hooray emitted by Slocum and myself, at which some of the crowd started and others laughed. I did not know why then.

But soon they were off, with our horse right up in the bunch as far as the quarter pole, at which place he seemed to withdraw from the bunch, or, possibly more properly speaking, the bunch left him. His old exclusive habit overcame him, and he showed his preference for going along by himself instead of in the company of third-raters. It would have pleased us better, however, if he had withdrawn from the bunch the other way, and gone ahead of it. But what could one expect, anyway, from a strong-minded horse with such an individuality as he had. The more the driver urged, the haughtier he

became, and, the truth is, he was hustling to get inside the distance flag just as the band was getting ready to play "Hail to the Chief" or something else in honor of a third-rater that was about to push his nose under the wire. My partner and I respecting the disposition shown by our horse, never entered him in another race.

Driving home from the races in those days was a thrilling and dangerous event, a sort of free-for-all contest between all kinds of horses, attached to all sorts of vehicles, and driven by all sorts of drivers, all spurred by an ambition to get ahead even if they had to run their animals. Feeling somewhat disappointed with my track experience and somewhat exhilirated by the liquid consolation which I had absorbed, I resolved to beat that crowd up the road or die in the attempt. My horse seemed to catch my spirit, and for a time our efforts seemed crowned with success, but just at that time my sulky collided with another vehicle, and my expectations and myself took a drop. When I came to my senses a few moments later I was lying in the gutter, with my vision cast skyward, with the skin shy from one side of my face,

and the horse and sulky missing. Also on rising I discovered that my left leg had become slightly warped, although I soon got it straightened out to its accustomed length. A leg that had been pulled as mine had could not, in the nature of things, stay warped very long by a little thing like a collision. I also dared to hope that someone had stolen the horse, for in that brief afternoon I had become disgusted with the whole equine family.

Gathering myself together I boarded a street car, and set the passengers in consternation by my appearance. My stovepipe hat resembled an accordeon, and I resembled one who had gotten the worst of it in a stabbing affray. When I got to the city I found the horse calmly waiting for me at the barn, the proprietor wondering where he had left me and one wheel of the sulky. Our racing animal afterwards did business for a street car company, which I always considered a good joke on that corporation.

CHAPTER XII.

Everyone at some period of his life becomes imbued with an idea that he is cut out for something which is totally different from what Nature really intended, and makes a "try" at it. Of course he bumps up against a realization of misplaced energy in the end. I had always been fond of music, but the only effort I had ever made in that line was in the choir of the old country church that I attended in my boyhood days. It is quite probable that my vocal exertions there would not have met with the approval of a more discriminating audience.

But a fellow, as I have stated, gets into a condition of mind once in a while, especially when he has been trotting along with no special object in view except to have a time of it, when he thinks he ought to take up with something regular, hook on to something tangible, and follow something at which he can succeed; seek a harbor into which to steer his ship, and be able to say to people that he has accomplished something.

With a remembrance of the approval, or, at least, a passive forbearance, with my early musical efforts when I was first brought before the public as a singer by "Aunt Sally," I concluded that now I would give my musical talents a chance to shine in another direction for the edification of the world. I chose a cornet as an implement of torture, and paid for the same seventy-five dollars. This was a foolish move, as a second-hand fifteen dollar instrument would have created just as much consternation and distress. I began practice in my rooms at the Girard House. Those who have listened to the melodious strains emanating from an old-fashioned country "horning bee" or have lived to hear the inspired notes of a "calathumpian band," will have some idea of what the guests of the hotel had to endure while I was engaged in the effort to make a musician out of myself by the cornet method. Not only the occupants of the house, however, but the whole block was affected, and during these musical spasms of mine I was regularly consigned to the infernal regions by a large and respectable portion of Philadelphia.

The tune of "Hail Columbia" was at that time more popular than now, and was the object of my first attack. I coaxed as much of it out of the instrument as I could, but what came out was mangled and in pieces. Philadelphia had never heard the like of it before, and possibly has never heard anything approaching it since. During the balmy weather, when I had my windows open, the people were treated to an inferno of sounds that a people less God-fearing would have never submitted to for a moment. It is said that the wooden blinds so common upon the houses in Philadelphia were put there during this period of my musical madness. Nor did all Philadelphia within hearing put up with my efforts without a grumble, and indications of this discontent reached me frequently. The management of the hotel never directly asked me to cease the murderous work, as I had been a somewhat profitable boarder, and they expected, I guess, to make a good deal more out of me. But indirectly hints did reach me. Occasionally a bell boy would rap at my door and earnestly inquire if anything was the matter. I always assured

them I was all right; and while appreciating the gentle hints thrown out, I argued that they or no one else had the right to disturb my musical lessons, much less deprive the world of a musician of promised renown. So I continued pouring my soul into that horn and skipped notes and flatted where I should not have done so, to the great edification of myself. During these performances the bells in the office were kept on a constant jangle by well-meaning, but unappreciative guests, who insisted on my suppression. Such expressions as the following would occasionally float up to where I was located:

"Tell that blankety blank would-be player to let up."

"Tell that musical blacksmith that there is a law in Pennsylvania against such outrages."

"Tell him to go and soak his horn in a little coal-oil."

Of course there were many other expressions, more or less forcible, some intended to be scorching, and others uttered in a pleading, please don't, tone. The wonder is that I escaped arrest. The hotel proprietor was charitable, as I supposed, for he never

said a word at the time, but later when he presented me with a board bill of nineteen thousand dollars I reflected that there might have been some method in his silence. It did not state in so many words, "To damages caused by trying to play a cornet," but I thought I could see it there just the same; and the impression lingers with me still that my musical education cost me more than the education of some more pretentious tooter. I have several notes which were sent to me during this agonizing period, one of which reads:

"Kind Sir: I like music as well as anyone, and would suggest that a young man of your talent should go to Europe to complete his education. If you are lacking in funds, I am confident sufficient money can be raised among the guests of the hotel to place you beyond the reach of worry and want. This is written by one who not only has your welfare, but the welfare of others, at heart."

Slocum and I studied over this letter a little. He thought he could read between the lines a delicate invitation to me to cease my devotions. However, I was inclined to give the writer credit for entire sincerity.

Another note which I received read as follows:

"Mister, please stop that hellish noise."

This seemed to me direct and explicit, and more to the point. I considered the writer displeased.

Continuing my practice of "Hail Columbia," I got another note from the writer of the first one, which read as follows:

"I do not suppose anything but a fire which would consume you and your implement of torture, or an earthquake which would engulf you both, would ever stop the soul-torturing and nerve-destroying noise of which you are the author. I recognize that the chances are all against this appeal percolating what little brain you have, but if it should get wedged in anywhere, I will be considered a benefactor by a large number of enraged and outraged sufferers."

I found the above note under my door. It seemed direct and explicit enough, but it did not make me feel good. It certainly had the effect of smothering my musical ambition. The atmosphere of Philadelphia was no longer split by disquieting tones; and later I gave the horn to a member of the band of

Skiff and Gaylord's minstrels, in which, it will be remembered, I was a silent dividend drawer.

To succeed when the world is with you is one thing; to succeed when it is against you is a different matter. Meeting with discouragement in my musical ambitions, I struck out on another tack that I thought would sail me into a port where my coming would be recognized.

Back in the oil country when I was working there it was necessary for me to mix with a crowd of fellows who were as ready to fight as to eat, and the man who could use his fists to good purpose had an advantage which sometimes stood him in good stead. I had been in the habit of putting on the gloves with some of the boys, and acquitted myself well enough to cause me to think I could stand up before anything of my weight that walked. My disposition was never a quarrelsome one, and my fighting was always confined to good-natured bouts with my friends. My success gave me confidence, and enabled me to take chances in tough crowds that otherwise I would not have taken.

Having now forsaken the horn by force of circumstances, I decided to renew my interest in boxing. I argued that possibly the world would shortly be brought to know a new middle-weight champion of the roped arena. Having fully made up to this effect all the mind I possessed, I went over to New York and introduced myself to no less a personage than Joe Coburn, the celebrated fistic anaesthetic, but who had retired practically from his regular occupation of putting people to sleep, and was then running a sort of "academy" where he taught the manly art to those who paid for the privilege of being punched around, and where he sold drinks on the side for the edification of those who were bothered with a thirst. I made arrangements to become one of his pupils, and went "into training."

I believe he sized me up the first time I put in an appearance. He showed me his ideas of how to guard and counter, and as he allowed me to hit him a few raps occasionally, which would bring from him such remarks as "That's good," "Bully boy," I began to think I was becoming "it" with a large I, and in a short time would be obliged to take

up with a professor who was handier than he. I was elated. I was no horn-blower, but I was a boxer! If, I thought, the boys with whom I used to box could only see me now, as I was standing up and punching one of the greatest ring generals in the world, how they would envy me, and how proud they would be to boast that in their youthful days they had donned the mits with "Coal-Oil Johnny."

Then the lights went out. My face went up against a good swift punch, and I laid down, too tired to even dream. When consciousness returned I smiled a sickly sort of smile, and asked everyone to take a drink. This was a plan which I regularly adopted, and the crowd soon found it out and brought their friends, and soon Coburn was doing a first-class business at my expense. When the bar would try to take a rest, he would slide in his right and trade would again thrive. In fact I was a good thing, and each bump cost me money.

I soon concluded that boxing was not my forte, and sore, and somewhat discouraged, I went back to Philadelphia. Coburn said he was sorry to see me go; but I was willing

to let my reputation rest solely on the laurels I had gained among the boys along the creek, and let Coburn's bartender have a much-needed rest.

When I got back to Philadelphia, my friends hardly knew me. When I explained to them the reason for the condition of my visage, they only smiled.

During the winter the boys would sometimes go skating at the rink. In the real, true sense of the term, I had never had skates on in my life, although in the slang sense I had donned them several times. Being urged, I bought a pair one day and went with the crowd. Two of them volunteered to teach me, one on each side. My feet wobbled around, entirely out of my control, and the more I was escorted the further I seemed to get from the point where I could go it alone. I remembered that when I was younger I could slide upon the ice very successfully, though without skates, and I reasoned that possibly I could do so when wearing them. So the fellows permitted me to back and take a run. The start was all right. I was skipping along in good shape. Then my feet began to wobble, my arms to

describe angles, which resembled the gestures of a man in distress. And I was. People got either in my way, or I could not get out of theirs, and I knocked them down. They were strewn all over the rink. I was a sort of terror let loose. Then I leaned back too far, my feet went up into the place usually occupied by my head, and I studied astronomy for a few moments and saw more double stars than were ever seen through a telescope. I awoke to find myself the center of a partially maddened throng, and listened to several opinions of myself which I did not consider at all flattering. I removed the skates and threw them somewhere, and went home and poulticed myself.

CHAPTER XIII.

The agreement with Mr. Wickham, by the terms of which he was to have the use of my farm for six months at a rental of thirty thousand dollars, which would apply as so much purchase money upon the sale of the farm to him at twelve hundred thousand dollars, providing I could make a clear deed of the land at the end of the rental period, went into effect about January 1st, 1865. That is, under the foregoing arrangement he assumed entire charge of the farm at the time stated. I had received the thirty thousand dollars. In talking over the transaction with him a little later in the day on which Wickham paid me the thirty thousand dollars, he asked me to sign a note for that amount, so as to secure him in case anything should turn up whereby he could not hold the farm for the full term. If at the end of six months the agreement was fulfilled, the note was to be returned to me. Without waiting to see whether the contract would be fulfilled, he entered the note as a judg-

ment against the farm on January 9th, 1865, in the courts of Venango County. S. Q. Brown also entered the same judgment against my Meadville property about a month later. Through some private transaction between Wickham and Brown, Brown came into possession of the note, and entered it as stated. Instead of recognizing the spirit of our agreement, Wickham proceeded upon the idea, I think, that the thirty thousand dollars was to be considered as a loan, which it was not, in any sense of the word. I do not wish to do anyone an injustice, but the whole affair looked to me then, and more particularly in the light of later years, like a scheme to wrest my property from me.

In February of 1865, Dan Fowler, my Meadville friend, visited me in Philadelphia and conveyed to me the news that a judgment had been entered against my Meadville property; also that I had not made all my payments on the same as per my agreement with Horace Cullum. Fowler, too, had entered a judgment against my Meadville holdings for six thousand dollars, for money he had loaned to me. It is true that I

had borrowed some money from him prior to my arrangement with Wickham, and, in the confusion attendant upon my Philadelphia career, could not state the exact amount, though I never believed it equalled the amount of the judgment. He also entered the judgment against my oil farm in Venango County, and later entered another judgment of twenty thousand dollars against the farm, but for what reason I did not know then and do not know to-day.

As stated, when Fowler visited me in Philadelphia in February, 1865, he brought me word that my payments in the transactions with Cullum had not been kept; and he also informed me of the judgments entered by himself and Brown. The news of this laxity in the matter of payments came to me as a surprise, and almost sobered me up. Later I ascertained that my agreement with Cullum had been kept, that my agent, William Blackstone, had attended to the payments, and to-day I have a receipt in my possession for all of them, amounting to forty-five thousand dollars, which represented my interest in the business block.

Fowler represented himself as a sort of

angel of mercy. He pandered to my weaknesses, and called old "John Barleycorn" in to assist him. He stated that I would never receive much, if anything, from the Meadville property, and that he thought it would soon be hopelessly beyond my control. In this he was right. He further stated that if I would deed the property over to him, he would make me a present of sixteen hundred dollars, and if there should be anything left after the judgments were satisfied, he would give me the benefit of it, and he thought he would probably be able to save something over and above what these amounted to.

Leaving Philadelphia, Fowler proceeded to Rouseville to see Mrs. Steele, and represented to her that he had purchased my Meadville property, and asked for her signature to the deed. Possessing more sense than I had displayed, she hesitated about signing. He informed her that all my Meadville possessions were involved, and were bound to go out of our control, anyway; that he felt sorry because we had to lose so much property, and on account of that sympathy was willing to pay her three thousand dollars in

View down Oil Creek from Steele Farm, showing Rouseville on the left.

return for her signature to the deed—a matter easy of granting, a mere trifle. The notary—I do not recall his name, but he must have been a close friend of Fowler's—interjected his opinion that, as Mrs. Steele was not of age, the fact of her signing the deed would really make no difference; but that she might as well sign the document, as it would be like finding money.

Thus misled, Mrs. Steele finally consented, signed the deed, although she stated to them she did not do so of her own free will, and Fowler and his man Friday went their way, carrying in their inside pocket half of a Meadville business block, a ten thousand dollar residence, and the Barton farm.

Not hearing anything from Fowler after he was supposed to arrive home, a few weeks after the transaction I went to Meadville to see him. And while I succeeded in doing so, I found him an altogether different man in his actions toward me than formerly. He was now the possessor of my property, and he could not find time to talk to me. Witnessing this coldness, it began to dawn upon me that I had been duped. If I had had someone to advise me properly at the time,

I am quite certain I could have compelled him to disgorge; but I was chary in seeking advice, for so far in my career it seemed as if everyone was inclined to advise me wrong. So chagrined did I feel about being taken in in the above transaction, that I never said anything about it until the present.

Whether or not Fowler came to Philadelphia as a representative of Mr. Cullum, by whom he had theretofore been employed in selling barrels to the oil producers along Oil Creek, I do not know. Certainly while in Philadelphia, and in the transaction with Mrs. Steele, he so represented himself, and the property was deeded to him. One fact, however, is indelibly impressed upon my memory, and that is, I met Fowler first in the month of March, 1864, when he was selling barrels along the creek, and that in February of the following year he owned sixty-seven thousand dollars' worth of what had been my property, for which I never received any return except the amount which he had loaned me, and the sixteen hundred dollars paid to me in Philadelphia. In addition there was the three thousand dollars paid to my wife at the time she signed the deed.

I am aware that the foregoing reflects rather harsly upon my mental condition at the time and upon my lack of comprehension of business matters. In fact, I was a regular bargain counter. Yet I am willing to allow my actions to stand in comparison with those of the people who handled the other end of the transactions.

Troubles, they say, never come singly, and when they started on me they seemed to flock. At the end of six months Wickham gave up the farm, claiming it had not produced enough oil to justify a purchase, although before this period I had so adjusted matters with Hamilton McClintock that I could offer a clear title to the property, and was in a position, upon receipt of the purchase price, to pay all judgments against my holdings. The withdrawal of Wickham, however, left me without resources, except to the extent that I could "raise the dust" myself by operating the farm. I am happy to say that, so far as possible, I paid my obligations; but the avalanche of judgments that rushed down upon me proved so heavy as to almost overwhelm and discourage me. Learning of my embarrassments, other

creditors were not slow in rushing in. The correctness of the greater part of the amounts I have always questioned, but the creditors went upon the principle that, as long as the slaughtering had begun, they might as well make a complete job of it. In Philadelphia I owed four firms, besides a small balance upon my board bill at the Girard House. But this is what I got:

Henry Carnegie, proprietor of the hotel, entered a judgment of nineteen thousand dollars. I thought I had paid him nearly everything, but this bill brought to me the conclusion that I had not practiced the strict economy I should have done. They must have charged me for the air I breathed and then read the meter wrong. The four firms mentioned to enter judgments were J. E. Caldwell & Company, jewelers, for five thousand dollars; Lewis Ladomus, jeweler, for six thousand dollars; Charles Oakford & Company, tailors, five hundred and forty-one dollars; and last, but not least, Field & Collender, fifteen hundred dollars. In explanation of the latter I would say, some friend of Slocum's wanted to start a billiard room, and the latter, together with George

Brotherton, went his security to the amount of fifteen hundred dollars, and the claim came upon me. As to the jewelry, I must confess that more people in the Quaker City were wearing diamonds and such than there were before we made our sensational entrance into the city. The greater part of the jewelry for which I received the bills was gotten by my friends, and some of it found its way into pawn shops or was sold below cost to raise money when finances were low. Gold at that time was worth $2.50, and diamonds in proportion. So it is evident that it took some money to deck our crowd out with this costly material.

Andrew McKnight also entered a judgment against me for five thousand dollars. He took a lease on the farm before Mrs. McClintock died, drilled a well, which proved dry, and when the farm came into my possession he wanted me to pay him the money he had lost. This I refused to consider, and he entered a judgment.

Disgusted with myself, discouraged and sick at heart, upon the advice of Major James Mackey, my agent, I turned the farm over to Mrs. Steele for whatever benefit she

could derive from it. It was also upon his advice that Mrs. Steele sold the farm to Taylor, Mackey & Company for twenty thousand dollars. Immediately following the purchase, Judge William A. Galbraith, of Erie, Pa., entered up a judgment of $10,000 for legal services; Charles E. Taylor, of Franklin, entered two judgments, amounting to $12,500, and James Mackey, a judgment for $5,000. I do not believe that any of these judgments were valid, as I did not owe any of the parties one cent, and the judgments were doubtless entered against the property to ward off others which might have been contemplated. Galbraith's claim was for legal services, but I had paid him all I owed him. I had never had any dealings with Charles E. Taylor up to that time, and Mackey's claim was for services rendered, I believe.

They took possession of the land in March, 1866, and ran it until January 1st, 1867. After they had held it for this period (I was absent), Mrs. Steele insisted upon the purchase price. And although the farm had been held by them for nearly a year, all she realized from it was six thousand dollars.

So the famous and much-talked of oil farm passed out of our possession. If in my short, grotesque and foolish career as owner and proprietor I had been surrounded by men who had had my best interests at heart instead of by those who seemed to wish to profit by my weaknesses and innocence of legal procedure and business methods, circumstances might have been altered, and instead of being held up to the public in the light of a silly, unreasoning spendthrift, I would have been in possession of an ample fortune during my declining years.

In January, 1867, the farm was sold under the sheriff's hammer, and was bid in by George W. Hinkle, of Philadelphia, for thirty-five thousand dollars. It was afterwards controlled by a company, the shares of which were one hundred dollars each. It has passed through various hands, until to-day it is owned by Mr. John Wait, of Oil City, who, by drilling upon the hillsides as well as along the banks of the creek, and adopting up-to-date methods in oil production, has once more converted it into one of the best paying properties along Oil Creek. Many a lease in the oil regions to-day is

worked profitably that would have been abandoned as worthless by the operators of the earlier days. The pumping rig, by which several dozen wells can be pumped from one engine, is a great labor and expense saver over the old method of a boiler and engine at each well. The storing of oil in tanks, and the transportation of it therefrom by means of barrels, boats, etc., were large items of expense in the early days of the oil business, and made many wells valueless that have since become extremely profitable by reason of improved methods of handling oil. As a consequence, many thousands of acres of oil territory abandoned as worthless then, have in later years been converted into veritable mines of wealth. Great pipe line companies send gaugers to the wells now, who gauge the oil in the tank. The gauger presents the producer with a certificate of the amount of oil, then turns the fluid into the line of the company. When the price of oil is satisfactory to the owner, he presents his certificate at the office of the company and receives the current price for

his oil, with a small amount deducted therefrom to cover pipeage and storage charges. Such methods have caused the sun to shine in many places in the oil regions where otherwise there would have been perpetual shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

Through some kind provision of Nature, the pleasantest of dreams often come to those whose daily lives are crowded full of trial and grief, and it is good that it is so, for in that brief forgetfulness of daily trials they find their only happiness on this big earth. The poor man in his hovel may dream of a palace, where everything is of the gold and glitter order, where every want may be granted simply for the asking, and where the care-furrowed brow is made smooth. However, such surcease from life's actualities is only temporary, and sometimes only serves to make the real existence more bitter. No matter whether the dreamer be a king lying upon his downy couch or the beggar resting upon a board, to each the awakening always comes, the terrible realities of life again face them.

To-day as I look back upon that period of my life when I might have accomplished so much good for myself and my friends, and accomplished nothing; when I think of the

obligations of manhood placed upon me by reason of my family and friends, which I carelessly and thoughtlessly cast aside to rush into and be engulfed by a vortex of dissipation, it seems as though it were a dream, so utterly impossible and inhuman does it appear to me now.

From the time I made the bargain with William H. Wickham in the Girard House of Philadelphia, by the terms of which he paid me thirty thousand dollars, and held dangling before my eyes the promise of over a million dollars more in six months from that time, my feet trod the downward way, and at all times I was surrounded by those who were willing and ready to accompany me, so long as I paid the freight. I spent my money foolishly, recklessly, wickedly, gave it away without excuse; threw dollars to street urchins to see them scramble; tipped waiters with five and ten dollar bills; was intoxicated most of the time, and kept the crowd surrounding me usually in the same condition.

I seemed to forget the folks at home. The easiest thing in the world is to forget, even those things which should be kept in mem-

ory. Once or twice, however, I broke away from Philadelphia to go back to the old farm. Once Slocum accompanied me; another time Brotherton went along, at my expense, and we scattered wild oats on the way. I was sufficiently conscience-stricken, however, that I did not want to see my wife; but I did talk to her once, and then she pleaded with me to forsake my evil ways before it was too late. I paid no attention to this at the time, for I went back to Philadelphia and resumed the usual course. Liquor can make a man sell his soul to the devil quicker than anything else on earth, and certainly at this time mine was going devilward as fast as it could. A good evidence of this is shown by my neglect of those who, although they could have justly cast me off, remained true, hoping that some day I would forsake my evil ways and companions and hold my head up amongst men. I am not a temperance lecturer, and never wrote an article on the subject in my life, but if someone were to ask me to pen a sentiment for the benefit of the young men who have to face the temptations of the world, I do not know of anything better to say than,

"Tell the boys to drink water." Such a warning should be placed upon the walls of every household, so that the meaning of it would seek deep into the minds of the young.

Of course I consider it somewhat out of place that I should offer an excuse for making a fool of myself. A man is generally looked down upon for trying to apologize for something for which he is more to blame than anyone else. When a man goes into a thing with his eyes open, generally he cuts a poor figure when he adopts the excuse that someone else is responsible for his condition. But when I started out I was new to the world with which I was to mingle. My early life had been surrounded by good Christian influences, and my footsteps guarded as carefully by my good Christian guardian as though I had been of her own flesh and blood. I loved my wife, I loved my boy, and yet I went the "pace that kills."

Already I have given some idea of the crowd that surrounded me in my Philadelphia life. Some names I have not mentioned, but it is because I have forgotten them. All I can recall is that they swore

eternal fealty and friendship, clung to me while my money lasted, and forsook me when it was gone. These men were gamblers, men-about-town, actors, youths whom riches had pampered into a condition to make my kind of life attractive to them; business men whose motives were not of the best, and who should be classed with the sharpers whose methods were not always apparent to me because of my condition. Such was the following of courtiers who attended me, laughed when I laughed, drank when I drank, and at my expense; and by them I was flattered and fleeced. The pedestal upon which they placed me was so high that I seemed to look down into their expectant eyes and read in them admiration for my brightness, and I scattered favors in profusion. It was my prominence upon this pedestal also which made me such an easy mark.

While in this delirium rumors reached me that all was not well at home. Wickham, someone informed me, had not been doing right. To these things I paid but little attention, and continued on my giddy career. At the end of six months, I foolishly argued,

I would be able to make clear title to the property, and great wealth would be mine. So dull care was driven away, and I kept sailing along the same old rapids.

One day, in the midst of the wild delirium, a missive was handed me by the hotel clerk, from W. A. Galbraith, which read that Wickham had given up the farm and James A. Mackey had been placed in charge as my agent. More than a million dollars gone in one dash! I tried to realize it all. The fortune on which I had been staking everything had disappeared like a flash. I called Slocum to me—Slocum to whom in some wild drunken freak I had entrusted all; Slocum, who had always pretended to be my friend, and was friendly as long as I gave him money to spend. I needed his sympathy, and thought I had some right to it, but he had no sympathy or advice for me. He seemed willing to desert the ship. For the first time in a considerable period I became strictly sober, and for the first time in many, many days I thought of friends back home, of my good wife, who was now weighted with grief for me, and now had to confront this additional misfortune; and, for the first

time in my career of dissipation I did the manly and upright thing—I went to those who needed me.

At home I found things practically as they had been represented. Matters too long neglected had gone from bad to worse through the machinations of those who had taken advantage of my weakness. Looking at it in any way I could, the future seemed gloomy and dark. The farm, it is true, was left, but black clouds were hovering over it, and laden so heavily that, when the storm broke, it engulfed all.

Having now an occasional sober moment, I began to see Slocum in a different light, and I resolved to be rid of him and Philadelphia at the same time. I shook the city first, however, reasoning that the only just and manly thing to do was to go back to the oil regions and save what could be saved from the wreck. Before leaving Philadelphia I did something which has gained for me a great deal of notoriety, and has been magnified so much that it has been told as happening in a number of cities, and in a manner which best suited the imagination of the writers who treated of the occurrence.

I owed to the man who had the stable where I kept my team and carriage and who acted as my driver, as well as my "chaperone" on certain state occasions, a nice little bill for his services. Having no money to give him, and feeling under obligations to him for his arduous and faithful attention, I concluded to turn the horses, carriage, with its "coat-of-arms" and all, over to him, and did so before I bade him farewell. I regretted I could not pay my other bills as easily as I did this one. That action led to many outlandish and exaggerated stories, which have had a tendency to lead readers to the conclusion that I gave away a team of horses and a carriage as a regular daily recreation.

My back was now turned upon Philadelphia. My friends, the courtiers of my flush days, had forsaken me, and were seeking pastures new. My face was turned to the future, and the world looked cold enough. I was forsaken by all but one, and although she had been made to suffer more than all because of my misdeeds, she still believed in me and had faith that I would yet come out all right, and prove myself a man.

CHAPTER XV.

Two incidents of my brief and meteoric career have been touched upon in various newspaper articles meant to set forth some of my foolishness while I was playing the character of the champion spendthrift of the oil regions, and which had some, but exceedingly slight, foundations of truth.

If some accounts are to be believed, I spent a large portion of my wealth and the major portion of my time in giving banquets to my friends. It is quite true that often at the Girard House I treated a friend to a dinner at my table, where I always displayed a great profusion of liberality, tipped the waiters up to the limit, and made them my staunch and steadfast friends; and therefore it is quite probable secured many delicacies from the kitchen which many a more deserving boarder did not get. But the only real banquet which I ever backed financially was one that Slocum and I gave to our minstrel friends of the silent-dividend company of Skiff and Gaylord. At one time

my companion and myself, being in New York on one of our excursions, heard that the merry crew was to play at Ithaca, New York, on a certain date, and we went up there, incidentally to gaze upon our investment, but more particularly to have a high old time. And we had it. We received a cordial greeting from our old friends of the burnt cork, and my gratitude for the same swelled to such proportions that I resolved to even up in some way. Possibly I argued that some day I would get it all back in dividends; but then, what was the matter of a few hundred dollars between friends. So I arranged with the proprietor of the hotel to set a banquet, to be pulled off after the show. It was a complete success. Beyond that I hardly recollect, and to describe the details of the feast is beyond me. Neither could I have described them accurately the next morning. I remember that someone nominated me for President of the United States, and that I accepted the nomination. Also I recall the fact of a biscuit hitting a merry minstrel man in the eye; also that some of the delegates went to sleep under the table. Tax my memory as I may I have

no recollection of the manner in which the nominee for the presidency made his way from the banquet hall to his downy couch; but I do recall that the state of his feelings the next morning called for ice water in large doses. That was the only real, true banquet I ever gave. I think that was enough. From current report some people were led to believe that I spent most of my time in stocking special trains with drinkables, eatables, cigars, et cetera, and traveling with my friends about the country. This would doubtless have produced a lot of enjoyment, but I got mine in other ways.

The only special train I ever hired to run for me was not a train, but that essential portion thereof known as the engine. On one of our trips to the oil regions, Slocum and I decided to go to Erie, his home. Following a custom which he had acquired, we alighted from the train at a certain station to get a drink. We became so engrossed that the train, very inconsiderately, pulled out without us. This we considered as treatment entirely out of proportion to our rank, and we became somewhat indignant, and wanted everyone to know that we were not

accustomed to such slights, and that a railroad or two was the most insignificant of all our possessions. In an effort to pacify our wounded feelings, the railroad people agreed to give us a special engine for the sum of fifty dollars and catch the train for us, which they would hold up for ten minutes at one of the stations ahead. They got the fifty, and got us to the train, where we arrived scared nearly sober and full of cinders. And that was the only excursion I ever backed in my life.

Having now bumped up against a great heap of adversity, as I have observed, I shook the soil of Philadelphia from my soles and started for the oil regions. Seth Slocum went with me. He had never left me from the first moment he had become acquainted. He did not wish anyone to have a share of my wealth while he was on earth, and scarcely anyone did, especially of the gilded circle, unless he himself was also a beneficiary. He clung to me closer than a brother could or would have done, and would have so clung to his dying day, no doubt, had my money held out. But on my last trip from Philadelphia I did something

that I had not been indulging in theretofore, namely, I began to think; and the more I thought the more I became impressed with the idea if ever I was to amount to anything in the world, which I very much doubted, I must rid myself of Slocum. Every man is to a large extent what he makes of himself, and, therefore, to a large extent should be held responsible. But I was confident that the influence which Slocum had exerted over me had not been beneficial, and I could see no good which could come to me by keeping him on my staff. Therefore, I resolved to be rid of him as soon as I arrived home. I will give the fellow credit, however, for having a liking for me, but whether this was on account of any special characteristic beyond a willingness to part with my money to him, I do not know. But now my sober reflection told me that to get rid of him was the best thing I could do. I wanted to gain a foothold in the world somehow, and did not fancy the idea of being tripped up in so doing.

Therefore, when we arrived in Franklin I informed Slocum that our partnership must be dissolved. For a moment he seemed to

think I was joking, but I soon convinced him, for the first time in my life, of my earnestness, for I informed him that a memory of him would be more preferable than his presence; that no matter where he went, there I would not follow, and I did not intend he should follow me. He seemed dazed and bewildered at this statement of my intentions, or possibly at my firmness, as this was the first time I had ever shown any towards him, and for the first time in our experience positions were reversed, and I was dictating terms to him. He begged, he entreated, he supplicated, but all to no purpose. My mind was made up, and for the first time in my life I felt the satisfaction which comes to one when he succeeds in casting a baneful influence aside. The air I breathed seemed clearer, and more than that, I had the pleasant realization that I could assert myself on occasions if I wanted to, and take on some of the slight attributes of manhood.

When Slocum was spending my money, when he was surrounded by flatterers and fawners, and playing the role of a blustering spendthrift, he was the opposite of the man

who on this day of parting pleaded with me for mercy and forgiveness. And even then I listened to his entreaty that he was a physical as well as a financial wreck, and gave to him two notes of twenty-five hundred dollars each, he thinking that he might get something for them. And he did, for he sold the notes to John C. Porter, of Meadville, and they were afterwards entered against what was left of my property.

I had given Slocum everything he had ever asked me; had never refused him a favor. His will power seemed stronger than mine, and the foregoing proves that I had not yet gotten wholly rid of his influence. But after this transaction Seth Slocum went out of my life, and I breathed freer. I never saw him after that. He died in about two years after the time I parted from him. During his final illness he sent word that he wanted to see me, but I did not go to him. If he wanted to explain anything, it was not necessary. He may have wanted forgiveness.. He has that anyway. I will not say that I was not as much to blame as Seth Slocum ever was.

With several hundred dollars in my

pocket, I started out. First I went to Rouseville and took a look over the old place. Then I went up to visit Petroleum Center, which at that time was in its "glory" as one of the toughest places on the footstool. And so I was again back in the old Oil Creek valley, but not at this time playing the character of the bedangled, diamond-bedecked "Coal-Oil Johnny" of yore, but practically stranded, estranged from my friends of former days, with plenty of people around to whom I could speak, but none who would advise or who offered to extend a helping hand. Now that I was down and comparatively penniless, no one fawned upon me. To all intents and purposes I was practically a wanderer on the face of the earth. One time I went back to the old church up there in the woods of Oakland township. Memories came to me of a barefoot, happy boy, of the honest, open-hearted neighbors, and of the good old people who had guided my youthful footsteps and tried to start me right in the world. It seemed to me as though I was driven instinctively to the old church to pay a pennance, to give away to bitter feelings, to confess that I had

not lived as I should have lived, and ask forgiveness. The regrets which came to me at certain times I can never express. I realized that the life I had been living was but a rope of sand, and the problem set me for the future was one which I hardly dared to solve. Fully realizing that drink had been the principal cause of my undoing, I made many a fight against it. and many times I lost before I conquered.

As I have stated, I visited Petroleum Center. Like all the early oil towns, it had been built in a hurry, and possessed board shanties, hotels, places of amusement, and muddy streets. But for pure, unadulterated wickedness it eclipsed any town I had ever favored with my presence, and I had witnessed the seamy side of life in many cities. For open, flaunted vice and sin it laid over any other on the map. There was no city government, thugs carried matters with a high hand; resorts of a disreputable character flourished openly, and the unwary were fleeced right and left. The scenes enacted caused even old "rounders" to blush. It was not safe for a man to walk the streets at night alone. Sandbagging seemed to be a

regularly recognized occupation, and murder quite an occasional one. Gambling did not run behind closed doors, and thousands of dollars changed hands over the green cloth. Pleased to get away with my life, I went to Titusville, which was a lively, bustling town, which a capable municipal government had transformed into a place where, comparatively, law and order were not at a discount.

Speaking of oil towns, one must justly mention Rouseville, a place which had grown up on the old Buchanan farm, almost opposite my old farm. There was no settlement there when oil was first discovered along the creek, but now it was a bustling place, containing one or two good hotels, a theatre, several churches, and a lot of inhabitants of that busy, cheery, hospitable kind so characteristic of the oil country then as now. To-day Rouseville retains more of the typical architecture of the early oil region times than any other place along Oil Creek, and like all other towns has had its tragedies and comedies incident to the excitement attending the surging rush for wealth in the oil country. The burning of

the well, where Henry R. Rouse and many others met their death was a scene which I witnessed.

Leaving Titusville, I turned my steps toward the west, hoping, as many pilgrims before me, that fortune would at last smile upon me.

CHAPTER XVI.

From Titusville I went to Cleveland, Ohio. While there I stopped at the Weddell House, and on the evening of my arrival visited the theatre. Somehow it became known to a few that I was in the city, and I was gaped at by curious individuals, and remarks reached my ears which were not intended for me to hear. On my way back to the hotel after the performance at the theatre, I became suspicious of the actions of two men, thinking they had laid a conspiracy to part me from my money. However, I was not feeling in a mood to be sandbagged and spirited up some dark alley for the edification of a couple of crooks. What money I had with me I needed worse than I ever needed money before. So I took the middle of the street. They did not follow me there, and I arrived at the hotel without molestation. This was the nearest I ever came to being robbed in the old-fashioned, approved way, and that may not have been as near as I mistrusted. To being robbed in the more

genteel fashion I had not objected strenuously; but I did not wish to welcome any new departures. Having received in my brief career more notoriety than I ever desired, my inclination now was to seek rest and quiet, to get into places where I was not known, and procure some honest employment by which to live. But go where I would, it seemed that my record had preceded me, with the result that soon after arrival I would become surrounded by what to me at this time was an undesirable crowd of curiosity-mongers, who, whatever their intention, made my life a burden. Then I would move on to some other place, wishing for peace and quiet, with the usual result of being driven out. My nervous system was rendered more sensitive by articles which would appear in the newspapers, and they put me in bad temper. My attempted refutations would not appear in print; so I stopped saying anything about myself, harbored bitter thoughts, kept on retreating, and came to regard humanity in general as my bitter enemy.

I went over to Buffalo from Cleveland, and ran into a coterie of friends who had

"Coal Oil Johnny" standing at the site of the famous Hammond well.

known me when I was on the "firing line," and who insisted on making my stay pleasant and agreeable according to their ideas. I stood them off temporarily, and in the nighttime I skipped. I stopped in many places after leaving the Bison City, but a short time thereafter I found myself in Kansas City, looking for work, being really desirous of securing any honest occupation which would enable me to forget myself and become contented and happy once again. Certainly I thought this a worthy ambition, but no one seemed to care to share it with me, and often I became despondent; yet I never reached that stage of insanity which brought me to a contemplation of suicide. What was of no account in this world would stand a mightly poor show in the next, I argued, and if the world would try and put up with me I would do my level best to get along on the best terms I could with it. My mind at this time, too, often reverted to the happy days of the home on Oil Creek, and to the folks up there. Then would follow the thought of how things were instead of what they might have been, of the wreck which had followed my wake instead of what

might have been there; and at these times I did what many another fool has done, partook of the cup that cheers, but which too often inebriates.

On the first morning after my arrival at Kansas City I started out for a walk, wishing to see some familiar face or hear the voice of a friend, when someone behind me remarked:

"Well, I'll be darned."

"Well, I'll bet it isn't," chimed in another.

"Take your bet," argued the first voice.

I turned around and bumped right into my old minstrel friends and partners, Skiff and Gaylord.

I was as glad to see them as a hungry man is to eat. At that particular moment I realized how the Israelites felt when they clapped their eyes on the promised land. I stood there and shook their hands, we hugged each other, and raised high jinks, much to the edification of the onlookers.

My friends had heard of my misfortunes and now expressed genuine sympathy, the first I had listened to since the collapse. Their show was playing in the city at the time, and I found I was being advertised on

the same old bills which I had paid for back in Philadelphia. To myself I argued that I was just as much a proprietor of the aggregation as I ever had been, and, therefore, when Skiff said, "Johnny, you have been a good friend to us. Come along and travel with the show," the sun came out brighter than it had for a long time. We did not stick upon terms. My expenses were to be paid, and I was to take or sell tickets.

So again I was embarked upon a minstrel career, this time, however, destined to last much longer than my previous one. While I had up to this time argued that the returns from my investment in minstrelsy had not been adequate for the money expended, never having received a cent, it now seemed to me that I was being generously compensated. To travel with a crowd of congenial companions, with the assurance of a good living, at least, during the winter, was certainly preferable to traveling alone when all ahead was uncertainty.

We visited many of the principal western cities, among them Chicago, but while there I never tried to buy an opera house for a benefit performance, as reported. The show

finally worked its way over into Canada, where we played in the leading towns, including the cities of Toronto and Montreal. I was the "freak" of the aggregation, of course, and "Coal-Oil Johnny" was pointed out and stared at all along the line, for which I always held the advance agent largely responsible. I controlled my natural feeling of resentment on the ground that if it helped the show, it was all right. When with the minstrel company I did not object to being pointed out so strongly as when traveling by myself, as with the company one was more or less in "the public eye" anyway, and therefore felt that something was due to the public for the privilege of living at its expense.

Leaving Canada, we went over into New York State, crossing at Ogdensburg, and played in a number of towns in the eastern and central portions of the State. Thence we traveled up into Maine, and down through a goodly portion of New England. "Is that Coal-Oil Johnny? Wal, I swan!" was a common remark during this portion of our tour. Among a certain type of the New Englander this expression never varied more

than a word or two, and seemed as typical of the country as the rock-bound coasts and granite mountains.

I liked the New England people. There are many different types, generous, shrewd, and all hospitable. There is a quaintness in the speech of the rural type which attracts the stranger, and is as distinctive as the dialect of the South. And I could not help contrasting the solid New England yeomanry with the inhabitants of the old Oil Creek valley before the oil excitement disturbed them.

There was one individual in New England whom I did not like, and I ran across him several times in my capacity as ticket gatherer for the show. He was the fellow who tried to beat down the price of admission. To have reduced the tariff one cent would have afforded him unbounded satisfaction. This particular individual is the one who gives New England people a reputation for closeness and parsimony which is undeserved.

However, one day during the trip through New England I received a letter asking me to come home and begin to live over again,

and show to my friends that I could be a man. After one has kept away from the home folks as long as I had, and dreads to go back because of a realizing sense of the injuries he has wrought to their feelings by reason of the disgrace which he has brought upon them, and therefore has come to believe that home-ties are broken beyond repair, such a missive coming to him touches the heart. I had left home discouraged, filled with a thousand regrets, and surrounded by circumstances which brought to me a feeling that I had forfeited all the friends that I had ever possessed back there. As a consequence I had gone out into the world, cast my lot among strangers in order to, if possible, forget. Many times in my wanderings I had felt that I must certainly have been obliterated, and perhaps justly, from the thoughts of those who held the warmest place in my memory. Then regrets would overwhelm me, and I would go forward in a careless, reckless way, hoping to banish all such thoughts from my mind, for they were as so many evil spirits, disturbing my sleeping and waking hours. I had received two or three messages from home urging me to

lead a better life; and this I was earnestly trying to do; and while my efforts were not what they should have been, yet my life was one of complete sobriety and upright living in comparison with my record in the old Philadelphia days with Slocum.

An invitation to come home was not one which I expected, and it was some time before I could realize its full meaning. To expect full forgiveness by those I loved, and a complete restoration of their friendship was something I could not bring myself to realize, so little did I consider I deserved such recognition. But here was the invitation.

I decided to accept it, and told my decision to my minstrel friends. The boys gathered around me at the parting and expressed true regret. We had traveled many hundreds of miles together, and our minstrel family was a happy one. And, with sadness in my heart at the parting, but with a glad realization that I was going home, I bade farewell to that happy, genial, merry minstrel crowd forever. Most of the boys have passed over the Great Divide, and their laughter hushed forever from the ears of men. Some of them are still in the land of

the living, and if any of them read this page I want them to understand that I still possess a fond remembrance of those old days of 1866 and 1867, when we joked and laughed as we "traveled the world together."

While I left the boys back there in New England with feelings of sorrow, I was happy in the fact that, after all I had done, after all that had been said, after all the heart-pangs and the heart-burnings, forgiveness was written over the threshold, and I was going home.

CHAPTER XVII.

When I arrived in the Oil Creek valley I went first to the house of my brother-in-law, who was living on the old farm in a new dwelling which had been erected there, near the old McClintock house where my boyhood days had been spent. My father-in-law, at whose house my wife and boy were stopping, was living at Dempseytown, Venango County, several miles from our old home. I at first hesitated about going there, fearing I would not be welcome; then I reflected that the letter asking me to come was in my pocket. However, before I started, they heard I was back at the old place and I received a cordial invitation to come.

I can never forget my feelings as I approached the house. They were of doubt, mingled with glad expectation of seeing those whom I loved, and yet whom I felt I had so heartlessly and thoughtlessly neglected. Finally I mustered up courage sufficient to knock at the door. It was opened by Mr. Moffitt, who gave me a cordial hand-

clasp, and asked me to walk in. And inside was my good wife and mother, with tears in their eyes, and too, there was the lively youngster of a boy who jumped around and clapped his hands with delight. Figuratively, the fatted calf was killed for the returning and foolish prodigal. There was no word of reproach, no word of regret from that family circle. My welcome was true and hearty and implied that I was to be considered in the future, if I so desired, as one of the household. In other words, I was "returned and no questions asked."

When one has gone wrong, and his conscience rises in reproof at the wrong-doing, as mine had often done; when one has been cast out upon the world and brings himself to the thought that those who loved him at one time will, or should, know him no more; until such a time and then only will he enjoy to the fullest extent being again with those whom he loves, and appreciate the full forgiveness which can come from kind and loving hearts. And until such time arrives, he cannot ring down the curtain over the past and look with complacency toward the future.

The kindly interest and good-will of other friends gave me added hope, and I felt ready now to go out and battle with the world in earnest. The happiest moments of my life were those that I spent at this time, as I sat at the fireside with my family and friends, where full forgiveness banished the reproach which might have justly been given to me. Mrs. Moffitt treated me as kindly and lovingly as though I had been her son. I was "her boy," as she often expressed it; and it has always been a gratification to me that in later years it was possible for me to be near her in her final illness, to make her last hours happy. Then there was my boy, a robust lad, with a fine healthy interest in everything going on in the world, and capable of asking more questions than any other youngster living. He was glad to have me home, too; possibly not so much because I was his father as that I had traveled about some, and could gratify his curiosity by answering a part of his questions, at least.

The fall and winter of 1867 I spent at my father-in-law's. The next spring he sold the farm and moved to one in Sugarcreek town-

ship, in Venango County, which he had purchased. My wife gave me money enough with which to purchase a team, and with it I assisted to move the belongings over to the new place, and then assisted in the farming operations. My brother-in-law and I worked hard and faithfully, and accomplished a great deal towards clearing land, and putting the rest of it in good and paying condition.

In May of the year 1868, I took advantage of the bankruptcy law. Afterwards I regretted many times I did this, for many reasons, but the action was taken on the advice of a lawyer. It placed me in a position where it was impossible for me to contest any rights which I might have considered I still held in the property. The money represented by the Philadelphia judgments was the only amount which I honestly owed. Had I not followed the lawyer's advice it might have been possible for me to have proven the illegality of the other judgments, have reopened the Philadelphia judgments, and paid the money owed to my honest creditors. Still, I can truthfully set forth and aver that, even in the condition in

which I was now placed, I was far happier and better contented than when engaged in the gayer occupation of buying diamonds for myself and friends, and spending many thousands.

It was during the summer of 1868 when Mrs. Steele, with the assistance of her father, succeeded in collecting six thousand dollars for the oil farm in the transaction by which it passed into the possession of Taylor, Mackey and Company. In the fall of 1868 I moved my family to Franklin, where I went to teaming. At that time Henry Cullum, a son of Horace Cullum, the gentleman with whom I had gone into partnership on the business block venture in Meadville, Pa., was conducting a barrel factory in Franklin, in the Third Ward. About the first job of teaming I secured was hauling stave-bolts for him, and when the bill amounted to about forty dollars he failed, and I never received a cent for my work. Although the amount was but "a drop in the bucket" compared with the sums I had parted with in other transactions, I felt the loss more keenly than any I had ever experienced.

It was while in Franklin that I joined the Episcopal church. The rector of St. John's parish at that time took a kindly interest in me, which he has always retained, and for which I have always felt under the deepest obligations.

After working in Franklin for a year I went to Rouseville, in the fall of 1869, and there for some time followed the occupation of teamster, receiving good prices for my work. Later I was offered and accepted a position in the depot under Mr. E. A. Keane, who was agent there. My duties, for which I received sixty dollars per month, included the handling of baggage and freight, and the checking of the latter in and out. I received ten dollars a month more for extra services, and later, when the express office was put in there I received ten dollars additional for assisting in that department. It is needless to say that I was as busy as the traditional boy killing snakes. With my income I bought a home nearly opposite the depot. I rented my team out. I worked in the office and depot from six in the morning until eleven at night, sent my boy to school, and kept myself in a comparatively happy

frame of mind—happy because I was winning my way in the world, regaining the respect of my former neighbors and friends, and that, too, in sight of the old farm across the creek that had been such a factor in my life.

As all old-timers will remember, the Rouseville station at this time was a busy one, and Rouseville itself a lively community. A train was kept busy running between that town and Oil City, three miles below, transporting oil down and bringing coal back. The land around Rouseville had brought immense sums. Corning & Beers were offered four millions of dollars for the Smith farm, located up Cherry Run, which they had originally purchased for thirty-five hundred dollars from a man who had secured it in a trade for a yoke of oxen. This is only given as an example of the numerous business investments which surrounded the busy little town.

When Mr. Keene, the station-agent at Rouseville, resigned, he was succeeded by a gentleman whose name I will omit, but who was known by everyone as a ceaseless practical joker, but of the harmless kind. He

was always causing uneasiness in some quarters. I recall that he tied a cannon firecracker under the chair of a clerk, and soared that individual heavenward, and who came down cussing until the air was blue. We were afraid of answering his questions for fear of being "sold." As a consequence of this tendency for joking, everyone was laying for the station-master. One old fellow filled a tin horn with flour, went to the depot and called the agent to the window. He pointed the horn at him, but the flour was packed so tight that it could not be blown out. The agent took in the situation at a glance, reached down under the window, seized a small sack of flour, hit the old gentleman with it, and sent him out of the depot looking like Jack Frost. A book could be written of these pranks. They served to make our duties seem lighter.

While at Rouseville I was initiated as an Odd Fellow, and have always remained a member of that organization. I had not lived long in Rouseville, however, before I began to receive extended mention once more in the newspapers. They told of how I had reformed, of things I did, of things I did not

do, each article being more exaggerated than the preceding one. It was at this time originated the story, which gained wide circulation, to the effect that one day when upon one of my sprees in Philadelphia, I placed ten thousand dollars on deposit in a certain bank, which fact I had completely forgotten upon my return to sobriety. In later years the bank officials located me and the money, with interest, was turned over to me. No one could have been more pleased than I had this been true, but, unfortunately, it was not. It may have originated from the fact of my keeping a large sum of money in the safe at the Girard House.

While living at Rouseville a gentleman came to me and offered me five thousand dollars to relate to him the principal details of my career so that he could write a history of it. This offer I refused, as I refused all others. I thought that possibly some day the public would be allowed to forget all about me; but it never has, and as the years roll on the accounts become more and more exaggerated and I have been compelled to get into print myself as a sort of self-protection. I refused

many offers to exhibit myself with theatrical aggregations. In later years I could have received a large amount for exhibiting myself at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. I was hewing out a new course, breaking a fresh path, and saving my money. Of course I got chances to invest the money, and I did. Mr. James Bredin had an oil lease at Bredinsburg which he thought unusually promising and wished me to go into partnership with him and drill a well. I put six hundred dollars into this enterprise, the well proved dry, and thus went a good lot of money which I had worked long and hard to accumulate, and demonstrated that my lucky star was not getting in its work at influencing my career to the fullest extent. After nearly two years and a half in the depot, feeling dissatisfied, and wishing to fit myself for something better, I withdrew after a period of the hardest work I ever performed in my life. But I had worked myself into the good favor of many people, and I felt recompensed, for they were good enough to come and take me by the hand and make me feel that I was, at least, some sort of a factor in the world.

And I can say that during this period, when working seventeen hours out of every twenty-four, leading a sober life, and with wife and boy happy on my account, I first realized what a pleasure it was to take care of myself and family.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Leaving Rouseville in the fall of 1873, I went to Pittsburgh, taking my family with me, my purpose being to try a course in the Iron City Business College, thinking it would further my chances of meeting with success in life.

I found Pittsburgh a busier city than when I had visited it in company with Mr. Hayes a few years before, but, in view of my experiences in the interim, it did not seem as large. Nor did I care so much for riding upon the street cars. However, I had a boy to whom this afforded much pleasure, and I often accompanied him. We were in Pittsburgh for four months, the time necessary to complete the course I was taking, and I have always believed I acquitted myself with credit as a student. To see a fellow who had been through the experiences I had, calmly settled down to the life of a scholar even in a business college, seemed almost a paradox to some people. My previous experience had been chiefly confined to one

side of the ledger; now I became acquainted with the other as well. I should have done this earlier in life.

We returned to Franklin in the spring of 1874. I tried to secure a position, and several men offered to assist me to that end. But I was not successful, and became somewhat discouraged. The little city did not offer as many opportunities for advancement then as it does to-day. However, I did make a business move to the extent of putting some money in a meat market with my brother-in-law, but the venture did not pay, and I withdrew.

I found the feeling of despondency creeping over me again. At times everything seemed to conspire against my getting a foothold. Surrounding me, too, were many who were acquaintances of long standing, and the invitations to drink became too frequent. So I concluded to seek pastures new and felt a deeper longing than ever to find some place where no one knew of my past career. Taking my family with me, I again turned westward. Before starting we had not fully determined upon our destination. But one day we left the train at Denison,

Iowa, and here I planted my flag with the resolve to go to work at any honest occupation I could get which would afford a living for us.

Denison is the county seat of Crawford County, Iowa, and is located between the East and West Boyer rivers, at the junction of the two streams.

Here we found the people warm-hearted and generous, and, so far as I knew, no one in the town was aware of my identity as "Coal-Oil Johnny," although I went under my full name. We bought some lots, and built a house, went to housekeeping, and then I looked around for something by which to earn a living. The first one to offer me employment was a Mr. Homer Darnell, who, as it happened, had relatives in Franklin, Pa. He employed many men, as he had a contract for building bridges for two counties, and he engaged me to drive a team and haul lumber for these structures. I went to work with a will, and kept at this occupation steadily all through the first summer, and until the cold weather came in the fall.

I had never since my return to sober life

enjoyed myself so thoroughly as I did in this Western town. No one but my family knew my identity, or, if they did, said nothing about it, and I was for a period protected from that prying curiosity which had always been so odious to me. Oftentimes my duties would take me for miles over the prairie, where there was not a building or a human being in sight; and out there in the solitude, with nothing but the sky above and the ground beneath, far away from the old world I had known, where no one could break in upon the silence and burden my mind with a thought of the cares and troubles of other days, I felt that I had many blessings to be thankful for. My work was hard, but I liked it, and I could contemplate the future with perfect serenity.

Of necessity our "gang" roughed it a good deal, slept where night would overtake us, and partook of any kind of food that was presented. This was always eaten with a relish.

As I have said, the people of the town were warm-hearted and generous, so characteristic of the West. I recall that Mr. J. Fred Myers was the editor of the "Review,"

a Republican weekly. I want to give him full credit for his kindness in an indirect way to me; for when my identity afterwards became known, and a new batch of exploits appeared in the papers of the larger cities, he never reprinted any of them in the pages of his bright little journal. And this was done by him without any request upon my part for him so to do.

In the fall of the year I secured a position as manager of the grocery department in a large department store, an establishment that sold everything that could possibly be needed, from pins to coffins. One of the partners was an Englishman, who had come to Denison to take an interest in the store, and from the time he became a partner it was a success. With him came one brother, and a friend who held a position as book-keeper in the establishment. I refer to these people, not only because they were exceedingly friendly to me, but because they were Episcopalians. My wife and I belonging to this denomination, our little coterie concluded it would be a good thing to build a church in which we could worship according to our creed. Consequently we formed

a little society, called upon other people whom we thought would be interested, and some who did not attend regularly any church. We got up a Sunday school and gathered in all the scholars we could find, many of them children who had never attended such a school, and made them welcome. We soon had a good attendance. The ladies formed an Aid Society, and raised some money in that way. The work on the church was performed by different individuals in the congregation, and most of the work was done after regular business hours. One of the members, a carpenter, aided most efficiently. The structure was begun in April, and about Thanksgiving time the roof was completed. We all went to work with a will, and in order to keep down expenses the duties about the church were attended to by the different members. Two ladies were designated each week to sweep it. As I lived near the edifice, I attended to the fires. I was also elected as one of the vestrymen, in which capacity I served for about two years, when I was elected senior warden. I was never more interested in anything than to see that church a success,

and it was a success, and its power of doing good gradually extended. Our first rector was a kindly old gentleman, who believed that one of the paramount duties of this world was in doing good to others. He made this his daily creed, and lived up to it. Those who live in the West know that a cyclone is no respecter of a church more than of any other building. One day a cyclone came to Denison, and lifted the little church off of its foundations. At a comparatively slight expense it was replaced. I recall that one of the contributors to this fund was the former rector of St. John's church at Franklin, Pa. Not only do I feel grateful for this contribution, but for many other acts showing an interest in my welfare. At one time when some misguided young man of wealth was parading under the name of "Coal-Oil Johnny," and met his death in a tragic manner, my obituary began to appear in the newspapers, together with a record of my life. At that time this rector took it upon himself to set at rest these misleading reports, and was kind enough to say that I was living the life of a respected and honored citizen

in a western town, and that most of the stories told of me could not be justified or sustained by the actual facts. To this man I owe a great deal for putting me upon the way to a better life than I had ever known before I came under his kind and thoughtful influence.

Another man to whom I owe a debt of gratitude was Mr. Issachar Schofield, of Dunlap, Iowa, a Quaker, who owned a flour and feed store in Denison. After serving eighteen months in the department store I left to take charge of the Denison branch of Mr. Schofield's business. The latter was one of the squarest men I have ever met. He would rather have parted with his right arm than to have taken undue advantage of anyone, and, as a consequence, he enjoyed great credit and patronage. Afterwards his Denison business was increased by adding a grain elevator, and I superintended all of the business connected with that. My son had been at school at Ames, Iowa, for a year, and coming home, and anxious for something to do, I put him at work running the engine in the elevator for a time.

I say with some pride that during the entire period of my service with Mr. Schofield he never found one word of fault with the way I conducted matters. Affairs were handled honestly, and that satisfied him. Near us were large settlements of Swede and German farmers. The latter were our exclusive customers, and would trust us implicitly in the matter of weight and measurement of their grain. These farmers were thrifty. I remember one old German who had six pretty daughters, but no sons. The daughters worked on the farm, and they would assist their father in drawing the grain to market. They could handle the heavy sacks as easily as a man could have done. I remember they had the rosy cheeks and the healthy complexions which an outdoor life gives.

I remained with Mr. Schofield until the fall of 1880, when he decided to go out of business. I would have purchased the Denison branch myself, but I found my health giving out. The dust of the elevator had proven injurious to my lungs, and I therefore felt it necessary to secure some other occupation. Never did I part from an em-

ployer with more regret than I did from this good old Quaker gentleman. He lived up to the golden rule, and one of his mottoes was: "When buying grain, pay all you can for it; but do not pay so much that you will have to cheat your customer in weight."

In this connection I might say that, as a side issue, my employer permitted me to conduct a small coal yard on my own account.

A Franklin gentleman, who was then doing business in Sioux City, learning that I was in Denison, came down and paid me a visit. We were glad to see him, and would have been glad to see anyone from the oil regions. However, in conversation with some of the people of Denison he let drop the fact that I was the famous "Coal-Oil Johnny" of newspaper notoriety, and this fact soon became known to everyone in Denison. My place of residence soon became located, and advertised by the newspapers, after which I had an opportunity offered of going to Chicago and entering a dime museum. Many other offers came to me from showmen. Yet, while my identity became known, it did not seem to make any

difference in the actions of my Denison friends toward me, for they always treated myself and family kindly. Although the most outlandish reports appeared in the public prints, they did not worry me as formerly; but worry me they did. My feelings towards the newspapers were not cordial, and when a "Burlington Hawkeye" man one day got into my house and asked for an interview I effectively fired him through the portal with the remark that if during my career I had killed half a dozen or so of his profession, my peace of mind would have been much greater.

Possibly I did not look at the matter in the right way; but when one has been hounded day and night by column after column of fabrication, and was afraid of walking along the street for fear of being pointed out as a freak; when he has seen his family suffer humiliation because of the lying propensities of some irresponsible space-writer—until then he cannot comprehend the feelings which came over me.

I have had some very peculiar experiences with individuals who knew all about me and whose information was gathered from read-

ing the reports which had been put in circulation. One in particular comes to my mind now, of a traveling man who came up from the depot with me one day in the "bus." Learning that my name was Steele, he asked me if I had ever known "Coal-Oil Johnny" Steele. I professed ignorance of such an individual, whereupon he informed me that he knew him at one time, was with him when he bought the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City, and rode all over the country with him on a special train. Whereupon I think I was justified in thinking that as a prevaricator that traveling man was something of what the boys called a "bird."

While in Denison I gave up the tobacco habit. I had always used the weed to excess, and was always chewing or smoking. It made me nervous, affected my health, and I resolved to rid myself of the habit. My appetite left me, and for a long time after breaking off, I could not sleep. It was one of the greatest trials I ever had, but I won, and with that habit went all the bad ones I ever had, and for twenty-five years I have not used tobacco in any form.

LATEST PHOTOGRAPH OF MR. STEELE,
"COAL OIL JOHNNY."

My health growing somewhat worse, we decided to move to Lincoln, Nebraska, where we could place our son in college. We lived in Lincoln during the winter of 1880 and 1881. I recall that it was an exceptional season. Snow is much scarcer in that part of the country than many of the people of the East imagine, and a snow storm was welcomed as a sort of novelty; the citizens took advantage of the pleasures it afforded in peculiar ways. Improvised sleighs would appear upon the streets soon after a fall of snow, a familiar kind being made of dry goods boxes placed on runners. I remember one individual who hitched his horse to a rocking chair. It is needless to say that he was the chief attraction.

During the fall of 1881, my health having improved to an extent that would enable me to go to work, I secured a position in a general merchandise store in Kearney, Nebraska. A few months later my family followed me. In the summer of 1882, there being a vacancy in the freight department of the Burlington station, I decided to quit the mercantile business and return to my former occupation of railroading. After serv-

ing in this capacity for some time, I was made cashier, and worked in this line until the spring of 1886. Kearney was a lively little town at this time, and was experiencing a real estate boom of considerable dimensions. I invested some money in this line, and realized a good turn. At this time I also invested in some Nebraska land near Kearney. When I purchased it the nearest railroad station was nineteen miles from it, but at the present time there is one railroad within two and a half, and another within three and a half miles. I still own this land, rent it on shares, and it is gradually improving in value. Kearney was a great shipping place for cattle, and the cowboys used to visit it. After a roundup these individuals would inject a little excitement into the life we lived there. They never did any great injury, but their fun was of a kind to scare a tenderfoot. They would ride their bronchos through the streets, fire revolvers in the air, and emit whoops which would chill the blood of anyone unused to such scenes. Another favorite amusement was to ride their ponies into a saloon and ask the bartender to hand them up a drink. When they

had disposed of it, they would turn the pony around, give a shout, and ride out. Sometimes they would race their animals along the sidewalks, at which time all foot passengers discreetly got out of the way.

While at Kearney we had the pleasure of assisting to reorganize the Episcopal mission, which had been suspended for some time. We found a few families who entered into the work heartily, and we began holding service in a store building; later the services were held in the Christian church and a Sunday school and Ladies' Auxiliary organized. The bishop, seeing the needs of the place, sent a clergyman and furnished means to carry on the work. In about a year we had a nice little church edifice. From this small beginning it has grown to be one of the leading churches of the diocese.

Finding that the close confinement of the office did not agree with me, I made application for a change that would give me outside work. I was transferred to Louisville, Nebraska, and given charge of the yard. It was with sincere regrets that we left Kearney and the many kind friends we had made

there. Louisville at that time was a busy little town of ten or twelve hundred inhabitants. There were two large stone quarries which were getting out about seventy-five cars of ballast daily for the Burlington R. R., and a large pottery manufactory. The country surrounding was given over to farming. We remained here about two years, when I was transferred to Ashland, Nebraska, a much larger town, about midway between Omaha and Lincoln. I remained here about ten years, when I was called east by the serious illness of a near relative, and our time has been divided between the East and my Western home ever since.

And so I have written the story. Doubtless it has been a disappointment to those who have had exalted notions of the escapades of "Coal-Oil Johnny." However, those who have known me for years I trust will at least give me credit for having been as truthful in my statements as possible, and will realize that to bridge thirty-five years with memory is no easy task, and not always proves an accurate one. The principal reason for this book was to set forth

the main details of my foolish career which have been so distorted in the public prints. Another, but perhaps worthier, motive has inspired me, namely, that if this book will act as a corrective influence upon some worthy but misguided young man who thinks a wild life desirable or manly, I shall feel more than repaid.

So thanking my readers for their kindness and consideration, I bid them good-bye.